



**CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT FUND PLAN FOR
GEORGIA
FFY 2010-2011**

This Plan describes the CCDF program to be conducted by the State/Territory for the period 10/1/09 – 9/30/11. As provided for in the applicable statutes and regulations, the Lead Agency has the flexibility to modify this program at any time, including changing the options selected or described herein.

The official text of the applicable laws and regulations govern, and the Lead Agency acknowledges its responsibility to adhere to them regardless of the fact that, for purposes of simplicity and clarity, the specific provisions printed herein are sometimes paraphrases of, or excerpts and incomplete quotations from, the full text.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 162.5 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and reviewing the collection of information.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Form ACF 118 Approved OMB Number: [INSERT NUMBER] expires [INSERT DATE]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AMENDMENTS LOG

PART 1 ADMINISTRATION

- 1.1 Lead Agency Information
- 1.2 State/Territory Child Care (CCDF) Contact Information
- 1.3 Estimated Funding
- 1.4 Estimated Administration Cost
- 1.5 Administration of the Program
- 1.6 Funds Used to Match CCDF
- 1.7 Improper Payments

PART 2 DEVELOPING THE CHILD CARE PROGRAM

- 2.1 Consultation and Coordination
- 2.2 Public Hearing Process
- 2.3 Public-Private Partnerships

PART 3 CHILD CARE SERVICES OFFERED

- 3.1 Description of Child Care Services
- 3.2 Payment Rates for the Provision of Child Care
- 3.3 Eligibility Criteria for Child Care
- 3.4 Priorities for Serving Children and Families
- 3.5 Sliding Fee Scale for Child Care Services

PART 4 PARENTAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 Application Process / Parental Choice
- 4.2 Records of Parental Complaints
- 4.3 Unlimited Access to Children in Child Care Settings
- 4.4 Criteria or Definitions Applied by TANF Agency to Determine Inability to Obtain Child Care

PART 5 ACTIVITIES & SERVICES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND AVAILABILITY OF CHILD CARE

- 5.1 Quality Targeted Funds and Set-Asides
- 5.2 Early Learning Guidelines and Professional Development Plans

PART 6 HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR PROVIDERS

(50 States & District of Columbia only)

- 6.1 Health and Safety Requirements for Center-Based Providers
- 6.2 Health and Safety Requirements for Group Home Child Care Providers
- 6.3 Health and Safety Requirements for Family Child Care Providers
- 6.4 Health and Safety Requirements for In-Home Child Care Providers
- 6.5 Exemptions to Health and Safety Requirements
- 6.6 Enforcement of Health and Safety Requirements
- 6.7 Exemptions from Immunization Requirements

PART 7 HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS IN THE TERRITORIES

- 7.1 Health and Safety Requirements for Center-Based Providers in the Territories
- 7.2 Health and Safety Requirements for Group Home Child Care Providers in the Territories
- 7.3 Health and Safety Requirements for Family Child Care Providers in the Territories
- 7.4 Health and Safety Requirements for In-Home Child Care Providers in the Territories
- 7.5 Exemptions to Territorial Health and Safety Requirements
- 7.6 Enforcement of Territorial Health and Safety Requirements
- 7.7 Exemptions from Territorial Immunization Requirements

APPENDIX 1 -- PROGRAM ASSURANCES AND CERTIFICATIONS

APPENDIX 2 -- ELIGIBILITY AND PRIORITY TERMINOLOGY

APPENDIX 3 -- ADDITIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS

AMENDMENTS LOG

CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT FUND PLAN FOR: GEORGIA FOR THE PERIOD: 10/1/09 – 9/30/11

Lead Agencies must submit plan amendments within 60 days of the effective date of an amendment (§98.18 (b)).

Instructions for Amendments:

- 1) Lead Agency completes the first 3 columns of the Amendment Log and sends a photocopy of the Log (showing the latest amendment sent to ACF) and the amended section(s) to the ACF Regional Office contact. Lead Agency also should indicate the Effective Date of the amended section in the footer at the bottom of the amended page(s). A copy of the Log, showing the latest amendment pending in ACF, is retained as part of the Lead Agency's Plan.
- 2) ACF completes column 4 and returns a photocopy of the Log to the grantee.
- 3) The Lead Agency replaces this page in the Plan with the copy of the Log received from ACF showing the approval date.

Note: This process depends on repeated subsequent use of the same Log page over the life of the Plan. At any time the Log should reflect all amendments, both approved and pending in ACF. The Lead Agency is advised to retain "old" plan pages that are superseded by amendments in a separate appendix to its Plan. This is especially important as auditors will review CCDF Plans and examine effective date of changes.

SECTION AMENDED	EFFECTIVE/ PROPOSED EFFECTIVE DATE	DATE SUBMITTED TO ACF	DATE APPROVED BY ACF
3.3.2	1/10	2/25/10	
3.3.3	1/10	2/25/10	
3.5.3	1/10	2/25/10	
5.1.1	2/10	2/25/10	
5.1.4	2/10	2/25/10	
5.1.6	2/10	2/25/10	
6.6.1	2/10	2/25/10	

PART 1 ADMINISTRATION

The agency shown below has been designated by the Chief Executive Officer of the State (or Territory), to represent the State (or Territory) as the Lead Agency. The Lead Agency agrees to administer the program in accordance with applicable Federal laws and regulations and the provisions of this Plan, including the assurances and certifications appended hereto. (658D, 658E)

1.1 Lead Agency Information (as designated by State/Territory Chief Executive Officer)

Name of Lead Agency: **Department of Human Services**

Address of Lead Agency: **Department of Human Services
2 Peachtree Street NW, Suite 29-250
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3142**

Name and Title of the Lead Agency's Chief Executive Officer:
B. J. Walker, Commissioner

Phone Number: **404-651-6314**

Fax Number: **404-651-8669**

E-Mail Address: **bjwalker@dhr.state.ga.us**

Web Address for Lead Agency (if any): **<http://www.dhr.georgia.gov>**

1.2 State/Territory Child Care (CCDF) Contact Information (day-to-day contact)

Name of the State/Territory Child Care Contact (CCDF): **Mona Jackson**
Title of State/Territory Child Care Contact: **Unit Manager**

Address: **Division of Family and Children Services, Child Care Unit
Two Peachtree St., NW, Suite 21-293
Atlanta, GA 30303-3142**

Phone Number: **404-657-3441**

Fax Number: **404-657-3489**

E-Mail Address: **mdjackso@dhr.state.ga.us**

Phone Number for CCDF program information (for the public) (if any): **404-657-3434**

Web Address for CCDF program information (for the public) (if any):

<http://dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/caps>

1.3 Estimated Funding

The Lead Agency estimates that the following amounts will be available for child care services and related activities during the 1-year period: October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010. (§98.13(a))

CCDF: **\$230,006,020.00**
Federal TANF Transfer to CCDF: **\$ 0**
Direct Federal TANF Spending on Child Care: **\$0**
State CCDF Maintenance of Effort Funds: **\$22,182,651.00**
State Matching Funds: **\$27,913,094**
Total Funds Available: **\$232,506,020.00**

ARRA

CCDF: **\$82,847,053**
Federal TANF Transfer to CCDF: **\$ 0**
Direct Federal TANF Spending on Child Care: **\$0**
State CCDF Maintenance of Effort Funds: **\$0**
State Matching Funds: **\$0**
Total Funds Available: **\$82,847,053**

1.4 Estimated Administration Cost

The Lead Agency estimates that the following amount (and percentage) of Federal CCDF and State Matching Funds will be used to administer the program (not to exceed 5 percent): **\$11,500,030.00 (5%)**. (658E(c) (3), §§98.13(a), 98.52)

ARRA

The Lead Agency estimates that the following amount (and percentage) of Federal CCDF and State Matching Funds will be used to administer the program (not to exceed 5 percent): **\$4,142,352.00 (5%)**. (658E(c) (3), §§98.13(a), 98.52)

1.5 Administration of the Program

1.5.1 Does the Lead Agency directly administer and implement all services, programs and activities funded under the CCDF Act, including those described in Part 5.1 – Activities & Services to Improve the Quality and Availability of Child Care, Quality Targeted Funds and Set-Aside?

☐ Yes.

X No. If no, use **Table 1.5.1** below to **identify** the name and type of agency that delivers services and activities. If more than one agency performs the task, identify all agencies in the box under “Agency,” and **indicate** in the box to the right whether each is a non-government entity.

Table 1.5.1: Administration of the Program

Service/Activity	Agency	Non-Government Entity (see Guidance for definition)
Determines individual eligibility:		
a) TANF families	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
b) Non-TANF families	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Assists parents in locating care	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Makes the provider payment	Private for-profit agency (Maximus)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Quality activities	Non-TANF State Agency (DECAL)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Other:		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

1.5.2. Describe how the Lead Agency maintains overall internal control for ensuring that the CCDF program is administered according to the rules established for the program (§98.11).

The Georgia Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) will maintain administrative control by following the regulations set forth in 658D(b)(1)(A), §98.11).

Within the Department of Human Services, the DFCS Office of Family Independence (OFI), State Child Care Unit manages the subsidized child care program, Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS), at the state level. County Departments of Family and Children Services determine eligibility for the CAPS program.

Fiscal management of the CAPS' program responsibilities remains at the state level. A private for-profit contractor issues payments to providers and delivers child care provider services. The State Child Care Unit meets monthly with the private contractor to ensure provider payments and services are administered according to established rules and regulations.

In order to obtain a more streamlined early care and education system in Georgia, Governor Sonny Perdue signed into law in May 2004 Senate Bill 456 creating Bright From The Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL). This department is responsible for child care licensing, management of the CCDF quality

set-aside and earmarked funds, and coordination of statewide early care and education initiatives. The State Child Care Unit meets quarterly with DECAL to discuss activities funded with CCDF quality set-aside and earmarked funds. As a recipient of federal funds, DECAL will comply with the approved plan and all federal requirements.

ARRA

The SCCU works closely with the Office of Audits and Budget, and the Data Analysis, Accountability, Research & Evaluation (DAARE) ARRA Accountability Officers to ensure internal controls are current and comply with federal and state 1512 reporting requirements. Weekly meetings are held for staff to discuss ARRA activities, outcomes, internal controls, monitoring and accountability for meeting 100% compliance with the 1512 reporting requirements.

1.5.3. Describe how the Lead Agency ensures adequate personnel, resources, systems, internal controls, and other components necessary for meeting CCDF reporting requirements (658K, §98.67, §§98.70 & 98.71, §§98.100 to 102), including the Lead Agency's plans for addressing any reporting deficiencies, if applicable. At a minimum, the description should address efforts for the following reporting requirements:

a) Fiscal Reporting

The DHS Office of Financial Services (OFS) is the agency responsible for the completion of the quarterly ACF 696 report. The OFS is comprised of six sections that provide administrative support to the Lead Agency. OFS Funds Management and DFCS Budget Services are the two sections of DHS responsible for monitoring the fund transactions of the CCDF grant. In addition, OFS Revenue section provides oversight of funds management with a third party contractor for wire transfers.

OFS staff utilize detailed expense reports from multiple accounting systems to gather data and track expenditures. In addition, in November 2008, State Child Care, DECAL, and OFS staff began to hold regular quarterly meetings to discuss and review CCDF expenditures in efforts to minimize potential discrepancies. This process provides an opportunity for a checks and balance system that improves communication and increases resources to identify and address any discrepancies that may arise.

If discrepancies are found, additional data and/or meetings with appropriate staff are requested until the discrepancy is resolved. After reconciliation of the expenditure reports is completed, a financial status report of the outcome is routed for review and approval to OFS directors and Division management. Upon approval of the status report, OFS staff submits the ACF 696 report into the federal reporting system.

ARRA

OFS staff utilize detailed expense reports generated from multiple accounting systems to gather data and track ARRA expenditures. In addition, Office of Audits staff conducts monthly reviews of all DECAL quality activities funded by ARRA in efforts to minimize potential discrepancies. The SCCU, Office of Audits, ARRA Accountability Officer and OFS will meet at least monthly to discuss and review ARRA activities and expenditures. This process provides a checks and balance system that improves communication and accountability as well as increases resources to identify and address any discrepancies that may arise.

If a discrepancy is found, additional data and/or meetings with appropriate staff is requested until the discrepancy is resolved or a corrective action plan is put in place. After reconciliation of the expenditure reports is completed, a financial status report of the outcome is routed for review and approval to appropriate OFS directors and Division management. Upon approval of the status report, the data is provided to the ARRA Accountability Officer for the 1512 federal reporting.

b) Data Reporting

The State Child Care Unit (SCCU) works closely with the Data Analysis, Accountability, Research & Evaluation (DAARE) ARRA Accountability Officers, DHS Office of Information and Technology (OIT), and the contractor responsible for provider payments and services to obtain the data needed to complete the ACF 800 and 801 reports.

SCCU staff manage and monitor the monthly uploading of data for the ACF 801 report into the state server by the contractor of the automated child care payment system. This data is retrieved by OIT to perform edit checks by utilizing another automated data system to ensure the data does not contain edit errors. If errors are found, OIT staff will contact SCCU staff who ensure the corrections are made. After all errors are corrected, SCCU staff contact the contractor of the automated child care payment system to upload the corrected data and resubmit the file into the state server restarting the process. When the data is received by OIT and clears their edit checks, the ACF 801 report is completed and submitted to ACF.

The SCCU works closely with the contractor of the automated child care payment system to compile the data for the ACF 800 report. This report is a compilation of all the ACF 801 reports submitted during the federal fiscal year and is submitted annually.

SCCU staff provide the contractor with a template to input the data required to complete the ACF 800 report. After completion, the contractor will return the template to the SCCU to review. SCCU staff will input data from the template into the federal website for the ACF 800 report to ensure

discrepancies do not exist. If discrepancies are found, SCCU staff will contact the contractor and work with them to resolve all discrepancies. Once the resolution has been completed, the process starts over with SCCU staff inputting the data from the template into the federal website. When the website indicates discrepancies do not exist, the ACF 801 report is completed and submitted to ACF.

ARRA

The SCCU works closely with the Office of Audits, OFS Budget and DAARE ARRA Accountability Officers to obtain the appropriate data needed to complete the 1512 federal report. The SCCU, Office of Audits, Budget Office, and DAARE ARRA Accountability Officer meet frequently to review reports and the data to be submitted for the 1512 reporting. If errors are found, all appropriate staff meet to correct and reconcile the discrepancies. SCCU staff meet with the DAARE ARRA Accountability Officer for an additional review of all compiled data for the 1512 report prior to inputting the data into the federal website. The SCCU, DAARE Accountability Officers and ARRA Project Manager will monitor and track expenses and all performance outcomes for CCDF 1512 compliance.

C) Error Rate Reporting

Georgia was in the first round of states to submit the Improper Authorizations for Payment Report to the ACF. The next reporting cycle for Georgia will be due for submission by June 2011. During the period between 2008 and 2010, state-level staff will review, at a minimum, 150 cases statewide per quarter to identify trends in possible improper authorizations and eligibility determinations. In counties where eligibility errors are found, meetings will be held with field staff, child care training staff, and state-level staff to discuss trends, corrective action plans, and determine if any additional training is needed. These counties will also continue to be included in on-going state-level reviews over the next two years.

Georgia uses a web-based automated child care payment system that was modified to include many of the state and federal reporting guidelines. This system is owned and operated by a private for pay contractor who is also responsible for provider management. Although the system is not considered an eligibility system, it does contain data fields that document client eligibility components in order to issue payments to child care providers. It also contains alerts and edits that prevent users from overlooking key eligibility requirements and minimizes child care providers' ability to excessively bill. This system also provides reports to assist child care staff with case management, identify data exceptions for clean-up, and view provider information.

In addition to the automated child care payment system, all county case managers have access to information regarding the eligibility of clients who

receive Food Stamps, TANF and Medicaid. Although the child care web based system and the eligibility system used in the other programs do not interface, case managers in each program are required to inform each other of changes in client cases.

In attempts to reduce errors and minimize improper payments, the CAPS program streamlined child care policy and restructured the state record review process statewide to mirror the federal record review process. These efforts were aimed to improve policy application and provide better alignment with other eligibility programs. In addition, monthly specialized trainings, emphasizing error trends, has been instituted for veteran child care staff and are available upon request.

The SCCU will continue to work closely within the contractual parameters of the automated service contractor to ensure system edits and reports are in place and functioning properly. This includes on-going User Acceptance Testing of the automated system and monitoring the contractor's performance and services. The CAPS program will also continue to work with the DHS Education and Training Unit to ensure on-going training for new child care staff and supervisors include issues found during case reviews and audits as well as basic child care policy and procedures.

1.6 Funds Used to Match CCDF

1.6.1 Will the Lead Agency use public funds to meet a part of the CCDF Match requirement pursuant to §98.53(e)(1)?

☒ Yes, **describe** the activity and source of funds:

The Lead Agency will use 34.9% in state funds to meet the FMAP.

1.6.2 Will the Lead Agency use private donated funds to meet a part of the matching requirement of the CCDF pursuant to §98.53(e)(2)?

☐ Yes. If yes, are those funds: (**check one below**)

☐ Donated directly to the State?

☐ Donated to a separate entity or entities designated to receive private donated funds?

a) How many entities are designated to receive private donated fund?

b) **Provide** information below for each entity:

Name:

Address:

Contact:

Type:

☒ No.

1.6.3 During this plan period, will State expenditures for Pre-K programs be used to meet any of the CCDF maintenance of effort (MOE) requirement?

☒ Yes (**respond to 1.6.5**), and:

- a) ☐ The State assures that its level of effort in full day/full year child care services has not been reduced, pursuant to §98.53(h)(1).
- b) (**less than 1%**) Estimated percentage of the MOE requirement that will be met with Pre-K expenditures. (Not to exceed 20%.)
- c) If the Lead Agency uses Pre-K expenditures to meet more than 10% of the MOE requirement, **describe** how the Lead Agency will coordinate its Pre-K and child care services to expand the availability of child care (§98.53(h)(4)):

☒ No.

1.6.4 During this plan period, will State expenditures for Pre-K programs be used to meet any of the CCDF Matching Fund requirements? (§98.53(h))

☒ Yes (**respond to 1.6.5**), and

- a) (**1%**) Estimated percentage of the Matching Fund requirement that will be met with pre-K expenditures. (Not to exceed 30%.)
- b) If the State uses Pre-K expenditures to meet more than 10% of the Matching Fund requirement, **describe** how the State will coordinate its Pre-K and child care services to expand the availability of child care (§98.53(h)(4)):

☐ No.

1.6.5 If the Lead Agency indicated “yes” to 1.6.3 or 1.6.4, **describe** Lead Agency efforts to ensure that pre-K programs meet the needs of working parents: (§98.53(h)(2))

Georgia's Pre-K program is offered free, regardless of parental income, to all children who reach four years of age on or before September 1 of the school year. The program provides a full 6.5-hour instructional day for children, five days a week, for 180 days a year in a variety of settings. These settings include but are not limited to public/private elementary and secondary schools, post secondary vocational technical institutes, private and state colleges, private non-profit and for-profit child care learning centers, military bases, and YMCA/YWCAs. This public/private partnership enables parents to choose the most appropriate classroom setting for their children

In addition, the Lead Agency partnered with DECAL (the state agency responsible for administering Georgia Pre-K), to provide subsidized child care during the Pre-K school year if the family meets the CAPS programmatic requirements. This

partnership helps working parents keep their children in safe, affordable quality environments while they work.

1.6.6 Will the Lead Agency use any other funds to meet a part of the CCDF Match requirement pursuant to §98.53(e)(1)?

☒ Yes, **describe** the activity and source of funds:

The Lead Agency will use \$400,000.00 in County Match funds. These funds are used to support administrative activities.

☐ No.

1.7 Improper Payments

Has your State implemented any strategies to prevent, measure, identify, reduce, and collect improper payments? (§98.60(i), §98.65, §98.67)

☒ Yes, and these strategies are:

The State Child Care Unit (SCCU) works closely with the DHS Office of Investigative Services (OIS) to prevent, identify, reduce, and/or collect suspected intentional program violation (SIPV). OIS sends the results of their investigation to the referring county office or the contractor managing provider payments. All claims negotiated by OIS are pursued, tracked, collected, and reported.

Georgia participated in the first group of states to conduct a record review process implementing the ACF improper authorization for payment error rate. The SCCU conducted a statewide review of 276 cases and 8 cases or 2.90% contained improper payments.

The following are strategies used to prevent, measure, identify, and reduce improper payments:

- **Expanded automated service to all counties in Georgia to improve attainment of client eligibility information and streamline policy.**
- **Restructured state record review process to mirror the federal record review process.**
- **Developed a quick help policy reference guide for child care staff.**
- **Provide monthly specialized trainings for child care staff emphasizing documentation, income calculations, and payment error trends.**
- **Conduct quarterly state level case record reviews based on the federal record review process.**
- **Fund two staff positions in OIS exclusively for investigating suspected child care improper payments.**

- Referral of all suspected intentional program violations to OIS by all child care staff and the contractor managing provider payments.
- Offset provider claims by reducing future reimbursement payments by one-half (50%) until the claim is paid in full. Offset amounts can be authorized for lower than one-half (50%) in hardship cases. Client repayments can be negotiated as low as \$10 per month.
- OIS issues reports indicating the number of referrals they receive per county. Regional program specialists provide training and technical assistance to county staff about the referral process.
- The SCCU and OIS are working together to implement a more aggressive process in recouping funds from clients and providers who refuse to repay their child care claims. This process includes a Consent Agreement, which is a legal document, between OIS and the Prosecuting Attorney's Council (PAC) of Georgia to pursue clients and childcare providers suspected of fraud. This process is called the CAPS PAC Agreement. All cases adjudicated through the CAPS PAC process will have a Court Order requiring repayment of the claim, and the consent order is enforceable. By including childcare providers in the process, DHS, OIS, and CAPS will improve enforcement of fraud claims against child care providers who terminate their participation in the CAPS program.
- The contractor managing provider payments employs Integrity Specialists who work on specified research projects including, but not limited to: provider underpayments, provider overpayments, OIS research, provider compliance, and program integrity issues. They are also responsible for working with existing processes to establish claims in the automated system, contacting providers when claims are established, discussing re-payment options, and providing provider documentation upon request.
- Regional program specialists and county supervisory staff select samples from active and recently closed cases to conduct child care case accuracy reviews.
- Positive outreach activities, such as newsletters, inform providers of the importance of accurate invoicing procedures.

There are many reports in the child care automated system that are used to measure and track improper payments and referrals. In addition, the *OIS Referral Report* tracks the number of referrals made to OIS by county and the *Child Care Error and Overpayment Report* tracks the number of errors, intentional program violations, and the total dollar amount of each overpayment in each county.

☐ No. If no, are there plans underway to determine and implement such strategies?

☐ Yes, and these planned strategies are: _____

☐ No.

PART 2 DEVELOPING THE CHILD CARE PROGRAM

2.1 Consultation and Coordination

2.1.1 Lead Agencies are required to *consult* with appropriate agencies and *coordinate* with other Federal, State, local, tribal (if applicable) and private agencies providing child care and early childhood development services (§98.12, §98.14(a),(b), §98.16(d)).

Indicate the entities with which the Lead Agency has a) **consulted** and b) **coordinated** (as defined below), by checking the appropriate box(es) in Table 2.1.1.

Consultation involves the meeting with or otherwise obtaining input from an appropriate agency in the development of the State Plan. **At a minimum, Lead Agencies must consult with representatives of general purpose local governments (noted by the asterisk in the chart below).**

Coordination involves the coordination of child care and early childhood development services, including efforts to coordinate across multiple entities, both public and private (for instance, in connection with a State Early Childhood Comprehensive System (SECCS) grant or infant-toddler initiative). **At a minimum, Lead Agencies must coordinate with** (1) other Federal, State, local, Tribal (if applicable), and/or private agencies responsible for providing child care and early childhood development services, (2) public health (including the agency responsible for immunizations and programs that promote children's emotional and mental health), (3) employment services / workforce development, (4) public education, and (5) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and (6) any Indian Tribes in the State receiving CCDF funds (noted by the asterisks in the chart below).

Table 2.1.1 Consultation and Coordination

Agency	a) Consultation in Development of the Plan	b) Coordination with Service Delivery
Representatives of local government	X*	X
Other Federal, State, local, Tribal (if applicable), and/or private agencies providing child care and early childhood development services.	X	X*
Public health		X*
Employment services / workforce development		X*
Public education		X*
TANF	X	X *
Indian Tribes/Tribal Organizations, when such entities exist within the boundaries of the State	N/A	N/A

PLAN FOR CCDF SERVICES IN GEORGIA
FOR THE PERIOD 10/1/09 – 9/30/11

Agency	a) Consultation in Development of the Plan	b) Coordination with Service Delivery
State/Tribal agency (agencies) responsible for:		
State pre-kindergarten programs		X
Head Start programs		X
Programs that promote inclusion for children with special needs		X
Other (See guidance):		X

*** Required.**

For each box checked in Table 2.1.1, (a) identify the agency(ies) providing the service and **(b) describe** the consultation and coordination efforts. Descriptions must be provided for any consultation or coordination required by statute or regulation.

Representatives of local government:

Collaborative child care partners and agencies, child care providers, local county DFCS office representatives statewide, and DFCS regional staff were given preliminary notice of the development of the draft of the State Plan. The 2010-2011 State Plan draft and pre-print guidance were posted on the CAPS web site for easy access. A link was posted on the CAPS web site for users to submit comments directly to the Lead Agency. Input was received from DECAL and DFCS agencies, as well as partners outside of government. These recommendations were incorporated into the draft of the plan when feasible.

Other Federal, State, local, Tribal (if applicable), and private agencies providing child care and early childhood development services:

The DHS Afterschool Services program is administered through the DFCS/OFI and is designed to support DHS's broader goal of promoting self-sufficiency among families and ending intergenerational poverty. Structured out-of-school time programs can play a critical role in motivating youth to reach a high level of educational attainment, as well as provide youth with an opportunity to improve physical fitness activity and gain exposure to good nutrition habits. The Afterschool Services program can assist in the development of quality programming for youth.

The DHS Afterschool Services program partners with community-based organizations and schools throughout the state of Georgia by funding afterschool and summer programs offering services to youth, ages 6 – 19 years old. Afterschool and summer programming give eligible youth the opportunity to participate in engaging and enriching experiences that

complement school learning and promote positive youth development during the out of school time.

Along with learning experiences and youth development programming, youth in funded programs engage in health and physical activity programming to increase their physical activity and improve management of their overall health and wellness. Additionally, youth and their parents/caregivers will have the opportunity to become more involved in and educated on available programs and services within their community.

The DHS Afterschool Services program, in collaboration with the State Child Care Unit, established a referral process through local county DFCS offices that provides eligible families access to participating afterschool and summer programs. This collaboration is expected to strengthen Georgia families and expand services available to school age youth.

State/Tribal agency (agencies) responsible for Public Health

- **Division of Public Health - <http://health.state.ga.us/programs/index.asp>**

DECAL and DHS work with the Division of Public Health, along with other entities, through the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) planning grant. Key partners in this initiative include the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Georgia Academy of Pediatrics, Family Connection Partnership, Georgia Association on Young Children, Head Start, Smart Start Georgia, and the Georgia Department of Education. This grant is funded to the state through the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau, in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Georgia is in the final year of a five-year strategic planning process, utilizing the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) planning grant. The purpose of the grant is to create a blueprint for the development of a comprehensive, high quality early childhood program of services to all children ages birth through five and their families.

State/Tribal agency (agencies) responsible for Employment Services and Workforce Development

Coordination between the Office of Family Independence (OFI) units responsible for TANF/Employment Services and the Childcare and Parent Services program is ongoing. Both the OFI Child Care Unit and TANF Unit work together to provide TANF customers access to seamless child care services to support state approved work, education, and training activities.

The TANF Unit outlines policy regarding work requirements for TANF customers. The Child Care Unit develops policy for the CAPS program that can support TANF work requirements. The units establish common requirements and regulations to the extent possible. Consultation between

the units is constant to resolve any conflicting policy that would negatively affect the work participation requirements. TANF customers who need child care to comply with their personal work plans receive priority when funds are limited; these families are not placed on a waiting list for child care assistance.

This collaboration is expected to yield:

- Affordable child care services for TANF customers who need child care to meet the TANF work participation requirements.
- Seamless child care services for families as they transition from TANF to self-sufficiency.
- Integrated service delivery between CAPS, TANF, and Food Stamps programs. This provides clients with easy access to the programs and facilitates communication between case managers who handle the client's related cases.
- Child care services for TANF eligible clients who choose not to use their TANF months but still need child care in support of employment activities.

State/Tribal agency (agencies) responsible for Public Education

- Alliance of Education Agency Heads -
<http://www.gaeducationalliance.org/>

Governor Sonny Perdue formed the Alliance of Education Agency Heads to bring all of Georgia's seven education agency heads together to collaboratively develop strategies that will improve the educational outcomes for Georgia's children and streamline its educational system. DECAL serves as a member of the alliance and participates on all five work groups that are aligned with the five Alliance goals.

DECAL and the Georgia Department of Education began a strong partnership while working on the National Association of State Boards of Education PK- 3rd grade grant during the 2007 - 2008 school year. By beginning this work together, the stage was set for continued work and collaboration for several other projects.

ARRA

DECAL will use ARRA funds to revise and distribute an inclusive, seamless list of state content standards for children birth through five years of age that build on the Common Core State Standards for education. The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has joined the national Common Core State Standards Initiative to adopt the K-12 standards. Similarly, DECAL

will revise and align the Georgia Early Learning Standards and the Pre-K Content Standards with the updated Georgia Kindergarten Performance Standards. The aligned birth through Pre-K standards will be incorporated into a seamless list of research- and evidence-based standards for educators and families.

- Georgia Board of Regents - <http://www.usg.edu/>

The Board of Regents oversees 34 institutions: 4 research universities, 2 regional universities, 13 state universities, 2 state colleges, and 13 two-year colleges. These institutions enroll more than 233,000 students and employ more than 9,000 faculty and 35,000 employees to provide teaching and related services to students and the communities in which they are located.

DECAL leads the effort to foster a seamless transition from the Technical College System of Georgia institutions to Board of Regents institutions through a system-wide articulation agreement. DECAL is partnering with organizations to implement a professional development system that is comprehensive and articulates. Collaboration with the Board of Regents is expected to yield increased access for child care providers to educational opportunities that will enhance their ability to provide high quality care and education for Georgia's children.

- Georgia Department of Education - <http://www.georgiastandards.org/index.asp>

DECAL and the Georgia Department of Education (DOE) work together to provide a seamless system of educational services for children in Georgia. Georgia offers universal pre-kindergarten to four year olds throughout the state. Georgia's Pre-K Program has content standards that guide curriculum and instruction. Georgia also offers universal public kindergarten in the public schools to five year olds. The DOE is required by the Quality Basic Education Act of 1985 to maintain a curriculum that specifies what students are expected to know in each subject and grade. The DOE is implementing Georgia Performance Standards that drive both instruction and assessment for Georgia's teachers and students from kindergarten through high school. The performance standards provide clear expectations for assessment, instruction and student work. The Georgia Performance Standards include Math, English/Language Arts, Science and Social Studies.

Representatives from DECAL participated in the development of the Georgia Performance Standards. In addition, the current DECAL Commissioner formerly served as the statewide consultant for the development and roll-out of the K-12 performance standards. Representatives from DECAL also participated in the development and the revision of the Content Standards of Georgia's Pre-K Program to reflect current educational research and align with Georgia's Quality Core Curriculum. The Content Standards provide the foundation for instruction

in all Georgia Pre-K classrooms and include seven curriculum areas: Language and Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Creative Expression, Social and Emotional Development, and Physical Development. By coordinating with the DOE, DECAL has aligned the Pre-K Content Standards and the voluntary Early Learning Standards for children birth through three with the Georgia K-12 Performance Standards.

DECAL has collaborated with the DOE on the recent creation of the Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (GKIDS) that is being rolled out across the state in the 2008-2009 school year.

In addition, DECAL is working with the DOE to obtain Georgia Testing Identification numbers (GTID) for every child attending Georgia's Pre-K Program. In the future, assigning a GTID in Pre-K will allow a seamless transfer of assessment data Pre-K – 16.

The Georgia DOE has been awarded the 2009 Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems grant from the U.S. Department of Education. DECAL will participate on the advisory committee as the data system is developed.

- Georgia Professional Standards Commission - <http://www.gapsc.com/>

The Professional Standards Commission (PSC) directs the preparation, certification, professional discipline, and recruitment of educators in Georgia. Georgia offers certification in a variety of fields with specific subjects or grade levels assigned to each field. Among the teaching fields are Early Childhood Education (Preschool - 5th grade) and Preschool -12th grade fields (Special Education, Art, Music, etc.). Service fields and leadership fields allow the educator to serve at all grade levels (Preschool-12th grade). In addition to full certification fields, endorsements to certificates are offered in specific early childhood education areas such as Birth to Five Endorsement and Special Education Preschool Endorsement (3-5) as well as teaching, service, and leadership areas. The commission provides a Birth-Five Early Childhood Teacher Certification available for participating colleges and universities. The curriculum for this degree is guided by Georgia's Early Learning Standards. To ensure coordination, members of the Georgia Professional Standards Commission participate on the Georgia Early Guidelines Advisory Group (Refer to Section 5.2).

DECAL works closely with the Professional Standards Commission (PSC). When PSC rolled out the Georgia Assessment for the Certification of Educators (<http://www.gace.nesinc.com/>) and the new teacher credentialing requirements, several key DECAL staff members participated in the development and testing phases. DECAL works with PSC on a regular basis to assist in verifying teacher credentials. DECAL has also formed a partnership with PSC to promote the Birth through Five Certification across the state.

- **Governor's Office of Student Achievement- <http://www.gaosa.org/>**

DECAL works with the Governor's Office of Student Achievement, which strives to increase student achievement and school completion across Georgia through meaningful, transparent, and objective analysis and communication of statewide data. In addition, the Governor's Office of Student Achievement provides policy support to the Governor and, ultimately, to the citizens of Georgia. DECAL annually submits the quality assessment scores for Georgia's Pre-K programs. These are posted on the Governor's Office of Student Achievement website to provide parents with information to assist them in choosing a site offering Georgia's Pre-K Program for their children.

- **Technical College System of Georgia - <http://www.tcsg.edu>**

DECAL coordinates with the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) to increase access to formal post-secondary education. The technical college statewide network is comprised of technical colleges that include branch campuses as well as a virtual technical college that allows early care and education professionals in each of Georgia's 159 counties to access both post-secondary educational opportunities in their communities and the Georgia HOPE grant.

The Technical College System of Georgia supports, enhances, and expands statewide coordinated childhood care and education efforts and professional development initiatives such as providing courses to meet the credentialing requirements of Child Development Associate (CDA) or higher credentials for Georgia Pre-K assistant teachers and family child care providers. Through this work, there is increased access for child care providers to educational opportunities that enhance their ability to provide high quality care and education for Georgia's children through user-friendly course scheduling, pre-admission assessment and support, and remedial support for non-traditional students.

State/Tribal agency (agencies) responsible for TANF

The OFI State Child Care and TANF units are both housed in the Division of Family and Children Services. This enables both the TANF and Child Care programs to establish common requirements and regulations to the extent possible. TANF staff outline the policy regarding work requirements for TANF customers. Child Care staff develop policies in the subsidized child care program (CAPS) to support TANF work requirements. Consultation between TANF and CAPS is constant to resolve any conflicting policy that would negatively affect the work participation requirements. TANF applicants and recipients who need child care to comply with their work requirements receive priority services and are not placed on a waiting list when funds are limited for child care assistance.

State/Tribal agency (agencies) responsible for State Pre-Kindergarten programs

- **Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)** - <http://www.dec.al.ga.gov>

DECAL coordinates with the DFCS Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program to fund extended-day services for four-year olds enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program, which operates for 6.5 hours per day for 180 days per year. The Pre-K funds are used to subsidize the care for children enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program who need before/after care, thereby increasing the number of high quality child care settings available to eligible families, and expanding the availability of services to eligible children. This partnership yields cost-effective utilization of funding streams; a higher quality of care and education with comprehensive services for children and their families; and enhanced developmental outcomes for children enrolled in these programs.

Parent engagement is a critical component of the Georgia's Pre-K Program. "At-risk" children are eligible to receive family support services through the Pre-K Resource Coordinators who ensure that the child's health needs are met, that child development/family engagement opportunities are provided, and that community resources are available to parents upon request. The Pre-K Resource Coordinators collaborate with community partners like Family Connections and Child Care Resource and Referral agencies to improve service delivery at the local level.

In addition, the Pre-K program is developing a framework for preparing children for successful transition into kindergarten. In partnership with the Georgia Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids (SPARK) initiative, Pre-K has worked in targeted communities- DeKalb, Gwinnett, Muscogee, and Camden counties, to develop model county/system transition programs and policies. Pre-K is also exploring the most effective method of delivering information on best practices in transition and supporting local programs in developing these practices.

DECAL works closely with Head Start agencies, local school districts, and child care learning centers offering Georgia's Pre-K Program (private providers, military child care providers, YMCA programs, etc.) to develop stronger partnerships, facilitate transitions and coordinate inclusion services. This initiative supports teachers through specialized training, mentoring, and developing collaborations within the county schools that can be replicated in other areas of the state. During the 2009-2010 school year, 22 counties had these collaborative initiatives lead by DECAL staff members. The initiative will continue at the local level with state support.

State/Tribal agency (agencies) responsible for Head Start

- **Head Start Collaboration Office at DECAL** - <http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/HeadStart/HeadStartMain.aspx>

The Head Start Collaboration Office is housed at DECAL enabling the state and federal leaders to promote coordination, collaboration and partnerships to improve the quality of services to low-income children and their families in Georgia. These partnerships are intended to facilitate the involvement of DECAL and the Georgia Head Start Association in developing state policies and plans which affect preschool children and their families; create significant cross-agency initiatives on behalf of children and their families; help build a more integrated and comprehensive service delivery system to improve families' access to services and promote a high level of programmatic quality; and encourage local community collaboration among Pre-K, Head Start and other early care and learning programs.

DECAL and Head Start work to blend resources and programs to serve more children and to expand the educational and instructional services to families.

The CAPS program coordinates with the local Head Start grantees and the Head Start Collaboration Office to increase the number of high quality child care settings available to eligible families. Service delivery is coordinated with the federally funded Head Start program to expand the availability of services to more eligible children (<http://www.georgiaheadstart.org/>). This collaboration yields cost-effective utilization of funding streams; a higher quality of care and education with comprehensive services for children and their families; and enhanced developmental outcomes for children enrolled in these programs.

Programs that promote inclusion for children with special needs

- **Babies Can't Wait - <http://health.state.ga.us/programs/bcw/index.asp>**

Babies Can't Wait (BCW) is Georgia's statewide interagency service delivery system for infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities and their families. BCW is established by Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which guarantees all eligible children, regardless of their disability, access to services that will enhance their development. The Georgia Department of Community Health/Division of Public Health is the lead agency administering the Babies Can't Wait Program in Georgia. The Division ensures that services are provided in accordance with federal guidelines; families have access to the services that are needed to enhance their child's development; and training is available to ensure that professionals who work with children and families have up-to-date information. Babies Can't Wait is administered through 18 District offices throughout the state. Through the 18 offices, children and families in every county in Georgia can access early intervention services. Inclusion Coordinators at the child care resource and referral agencies coordinate and collaborate with Babies Can't Wait to link child care providers and families to training and appropriate services.

- **Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies - www.gaccrra.org**

The CCDF supports the Inclusion Project through a contract between DECAL and each child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agency. Inclusion coordinators serve each child care resource and referral region. They are guided and supported by the state-level inclusion coordinator at DECAL. This project is the result of earlier planning by the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Babies Can't Wait program within the Family Health Branch of the Division of Public Health. The goal of this coordination is to increase the number of high quality, inclusive child care settings available to families. This collaboration is expected to yield an increased number of referrals to child care providers, including family child care homes, child care learning centers and school age care programs for parents of children with disabilities; an increased number of referrals to community resources that link parents to support services, financial aid information, medical equipment, and other information; an increased distribution of materials on finding child care, inclusive child care programs, benefits of inclusion, Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Individual with Disabilities Education Act; accessible free technical assistance to providers through telephone consultation and site visits; and training on a variety of topics related to children with special needs and the legal requirements for service provision.

- **The Governor's Council for Developmental Disabilities - <http://web.me.com/gcdd/GCDD/Home.html>**

The Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities for Georgia (GCDD), authorized under Public Law 106-402, the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act Amendments of 2000, is one of 55 entities of its type in the United States and territories that report to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Developmental Disabilities. The GCDD is an independent agency, attached to the Georgia Department of Human Services for administrative purposes. The GCDD serves as an advocate for all persons with developmental disabilities. The GCDD is charged with creating systems change for people with developmental disabilities and their families to: Increase independence, inclusion, integration, productivity and self-determination for people with developmental disabilities through such activities as public policy research, analysis, reform, project demonstrations, and education and training. The mission of the GCDD is to collaborate with citizens, public and private advocacy organizations, and policymakers to positively influence public policies that enhance the quality of life for people with developmental disabilities and their families. The Council achieves its mission through public policy research and analysis, promoting advocacy, public relations and funding programs that support best practices and capacity building.

Other:

- **Child and Adult Care Food Program & Summer Food Services Program**
<http://www.dec.state.ga.us/Nutrition/NutritionServicesMain.aspx>

The Nutrition Services Division of DECAL administers the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) for Georgia. The goal of these programs is to ensure that children and adults throughout Georgia have access to nutritious meals while they are in a day care setting and during the summer when school is not in session. Low-income families that may not be able to provide nutritious meals to their dependents when they are at home can be assured that they are receiving meals that meet the meal requirements established by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the CACFP and SFSP. These programs help to address the issues of hunger and malnutrition and the negative effects that they can have on an individual's health and educational development and growth. Informal providers are allowed to participate in the CACFP.

The Healthy Eating for Life project, funded in part by the USDA Team Nutrition Grant, works to improve lifelong healthy eating habits and increase physical activity among children between birth and five years old, their families, and their caregivers. The DECAL Nutrition and Physical Activity initiative collaborates with DHS, the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, the Fulton County Department of Health and Wellness, and child care resource and referral agencies to offer consistent nutrition and physical activity information and training to parents and caregivers (<http://www.healthyeatingforlife.org/>).

Increased participation in these programs should result in an improvement of the nutritional status of Georgians.

- **Department of Human Services Child Care Unit**
<http://dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/caps>

In December 2007 the State Child Care Unit established a child care advisory panel. The advisory panel is comprised of parents, child care providers, child care state and county staff, resource and referral staff, and state child care licensing staff. Panel members commit to serve one calendar year and can rotate off after meeting their commitment. Panel members discuss and provide recommendations to improve subsidized child care in Georgia. This collaboration provides parents and providers the opportunity to participate in decision-making regarding strategies to increase the availability, accessibility, and affordability of child care in Georgia.

- **Family Connection Partnership - <http://www.gafcp.org/>**

The Family Connection Partnership is a public/private partnership created by the State of Georgia and funders from the private sector. Family Connection Partnerships assist communities in addressing the serious

challenges facing Georgia's children and families and serves as a resource to state agencies that work to improve the conditions of children and families. The partnerships work jointly with Family Connection community collaboratives, state, and national partners to improve results for Georgia's children and families. Each collaborative serves as the local decision-making body for its community and develops a plan with strategies to improve results in five areas: healthy children, children ready for school, children succeeding in school, strong families, and self-sufficient families.

Collaboratives provide training and technical assistance customized to meet their communities' common and unique needs and support efforts in making better decisions locally; build and maintain relationships with public and private agencies and communities to share and combine resources, promote public policy, and improve services and supports for families; enhance public awareness, understanding, communication and commitment to improve results for children and families; and promote "what works" using research and evaluation practices that have proven to be effective in communities, while showcasing community successes. State partners include the Division of Family & Children Services, and DECAL. Local partnerships include the county Departments of Family and Children Services.

- First Lady's Children's Cabinet - <http://167.198.17.47/index.asp>

Georgia's First Lady, Mrs. Mary Perdue, launched The First Lady's Children's Cabinet. The First Lady's Children's Cabinet collaborates actively in sharing resources and removing barriers to service delivery. Many departments and agencies of state government play vital roles in promoting the welfare of Georgia's children. Therefore, the cabinet membership includes leaders from every state agency responsible for serving children including the Commissioner of the DHS; the Commissioner of the Department of Community Health; the Commissioner of DECAL and the State Superintendent of Schools.

The cabinet develops and implements a strategic plan for coordinating policy making and planning for all state agencies and programs that are responsible for children and their families. The cabinet focuses on eliminating service gaps, eliminating service duplication, and reducing unnecessary expenditures by emphasizing prevention. The cabinet will be accountable for the outcomes for Georgia's children as tracked in the *Annie E. Casey Kids Count*.

- Georgia Chambers of Commerce & Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education - <http://www.gachamber.com/>

The Georgia Chamber of Commerce is the unified voice of the business community, aggressively advocating the business viewpoint in the shaping of public policy, encouraging ethical business practices and ensuring the state's future as economically prosperous, educationally competitive and environmentally responsible. The Georgia Chamber works to ensure the

future health and strength of Georgia business through pro-active economic development programs and initiatives. The Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education is an affiliate of the Georgia Chambers of Commerce. The Georgia Chamber works with the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (<http://www.gpee.org/>) to raise awareness of and find solutions for improving education in the state by focusing on the critical issues facing education including early learning.

- Head Start Association - <http://www.georgiaheadstart.org/>

DECAL coordinates with the Head Start Association to deliver joint professional development opportunities to Pre-K program staff members and Head Start program staff members. For example, the Head Start Family Service Coordinators and Pre-K Resource Coordinators attend joint training using the nationally recognized *Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education* model developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy. Head Start and Pre-K teachers attend an advanced summer training institute. These efforts encourage comprehensive service delivery to families and promote relationships between programs.

- Smart Start Georgia - <http://www.smartstartga.org/content/home.htm>

Smart Start Georgia, the Early Learning Division of the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta, develops quality resources, commitments and partnerships between child care providers, government and business leaders to improve early care and education options for Georgia's children and to increase school readiness. Smart Start Georgia is a partnership among DECAL, the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation, the United Ways of Georgia, the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and others. Statewide initiatives include the Early Education Substitute Teacher Program which trains and supports individuals wishing to become early childcare and education substitute teachers in Georgia, and the Get Ready to Read program, an early literacy program designed to help early education and child care professionals, parents, and other caregivers, ensure that young children are equipped with the fundamental skills necessary for learning to read.

- Voices for Georgia's Children - <http://www.georgiavoices.org/>

Voices for Georgia's Children is an independent, non-profit organization whose mission is to substantially improve Georgia's ranking in meeting its children's needs according the *Kids Count* report issued annually by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. This will be accomplished by engaging lawmakers and the public into building a sustained, comprehensive, long-term agenda to impact the lives of children in five distinct areas: health, safety, education, connectedness, and employability.

Through advocacy, Voices for Georgia's Children assists leaders and citizens of Georgia in making decisions on policy, investment and systems that serve

children and youth to produce better outcomes through supportive public policies and adequate public and private resources.

2.1.2 Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan for Child Care and Early Childhood Programs. Lead Agencies are encouraged to develop an emergency preparedness and response plan for child care and other early childhood programs operating in the State/Territory. The plan should include provisions for continuity of services and child care assistance payments to families and providers in the event of an emergency or disaster. Indicate which of the following best describes the current status of your efforts in this area. **Check only ONE.**

- ☐ **Planning.** Indicate whether steps are under way to develop a plan. If so, describe the time frames for completion and/or implementation, the steps anticipated and how the plan will be coordinated with other emergency planning efforts within the State/Territory.
- ☒ **Developing.** A plan is being drafted. Include the plan as Attachment 2.1.2, if available.
- ☐ **Developed.** A plan has been written but has not yet been implemented. Include the plan as Attachment 2.1.2, if available.
- ☐ **Implementing.** A plan has been written and is now in the process of being implemented. The plan is included as Attachment 2.1.2.
- ☐ **Other. Describe:**

a) **Describe** the progress made by the State/Territory in planning for an emergency or disaster event with regards to the operation of child care and early childhood education programs.

Although not the lead agency, DECAL licenses child care learning centers and group day care homes and registers family day care homes. Each center and home is required by state rules to have and implement a written plan for handling emergencies, including but not limited to, severe weather, loss of electrical power, or loss of water.

b) **Describe** provisions the Lead Agency has in place for the continuation of core child care functions during and after a disaster or emergency.

An “In Case of Emergency” phone tree for all State Child Care Unit staff is maintained and distributed to each member. The phone tree is also stored electronically and accessible by all SCCU staff. DHS will communicate with designated DHS/DFCS staff at designated intervals to report on on-going situations. Individual workloads may be redistributed on a temporary basis. The CAPS program has a Disaster Recovery plan contractually developed with the contractor managing the child care automated system to store all client and provider data records. The plan stipulates how and where data must be protected and maintained for client cases, payee history and provider files. Data is maintained on two (2) different servers and at two different locations.

In the event of a disaster, victims can (as defined by the state) receive priority services for child care. All child care services could be performed at alternative locations. In addition, provider payment services may be accessed from any remote location utilizing a computer and the appropriate password. Paper files will be established and stored in the central files office and scanned for electronic storage by the Program Assistant.

c) Describe efforts the Lead Agency has undertaken to provide resources and information to families and child care providers about ways to plan and prepare for an emergency or disaster situation.

Each county DFCS office is responsible for developing and maintaining an emergency or disaster preparedness plan to ensure the safety of staff and the customers they serve. DHS sections will make arrangements with designated individuals or agencies to provide interpreting and translation services to non-English speaking customers/constituents who are involved in emergency situations. The CAPS program also provides informative information in monthly newsletters to provider.

d) Describe how the Lead Agency is coordinating with other State/Territory agencies, private, and/or non-profit charitable organizations to ensure that child care and early childhood programs are included in planning, response, and recovery efforts.

The Lead Agency is collaborating with other state agencies, private, non-profit, and disaster preparedness groups to formulate a plan to ensure that child care and early childhood programs are included in the planning, response, and recovery efforts.

2.1.3 Plan for Early Childhood Program Coordination. Lead Agencies are encouraged to develop a plan for coordination across early childhood programs. **Indicate** which of the following best describes the current status of your efforts in this area. **Note: Check only ONE.**

- ☐ **Planning.** Are there steps under way to develop a plan?
- ☐ Yes, and **describe** the time frames for completion and/or implementation, the steps anticipated, and how the plan is expected to support early language, literacy, pre-reading and early math concepts.
- ☐ No.
- ☐ **Developing.** A plan is being drafted. Include the draft as **Attachment 2.1.3** if available.
- ☐ **Developed.** A plan has been written but has not yet been implemented. Include the plan as **Attachment 2.1.3** if available.
- ☒ **Implementing.** A plan has been written and is now in the process of being implemented. Include the plan as **Attachment 2.1.3**.

☐ **Other (describe):**

a) Describe the progress made by the State/Territory in planning for coordination across early childhood programs since the date of submission of the 2008-2009 State Plan.

Georgia is in the final year of a five-year strategic planning process and the third year of implementation utilizing the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) planning grant, funded to the state through the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau, in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The purpose of the grant is to create a blueprint for the development of a comprehensive, high quality early childhood program of services to all children birth through five and their families.

Key partners in this initiative include DHS, DECAL, the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Georgia Academy of Pediatrics, Family Connection Partnership, Head Start, Smart Start Georgia, Georgia Division of Public Health, and the Georgia Department of Education.

Implementation plans have been developed in each of the five ECCS areas. From those specific implementation plans, a process was used to select and prioritize the top strategies. The top strategies include: implementing the navigator teams in each county to direct families to resources (medical, dental, prevention and developmental services, and adequate health insurance coverage); creating an early childhood clearing house to provide access to evidence-based practices that provide high-quality information for parents and professionals; designing and coordinating training related to medical/dental homes, social-emotional development, family support, and other content areas; expanding the developmental screenings conducted by Medicaid providers to a systematic statewide process of universal screening of children at birth, two years, and school entry; and implementing social marketing statewide to disseminate information. The plan is included as Attachment 2.1.3.

b) Indicate whether there is an entity that is, or will be, responsible for ensuring that such coordination occurs. Indicate the four or more early childhood programs and/or funding streams that are coordinated and describe the nature of the coordination.

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (www.decal.ga.gov) was created to develop, implement, and sustain a system of early care and education; to infuse a culture of education and learning in child care; to reduce bureaucracy; eliminate duplication of services, and coordinate early childhood efforts between early childhood advocates and providers. To meet these objectives, DECAL uses and/or coordinates the resources from multiple funding streams to help provide families with high quality comprehensive services that promote the healthy development of their preschool and school age children. These funding streams include the

lottery-funded Pre-K program; the state of Georgia; the federally-funded Head Start program, the federally-funded USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP); CCDF targeted funds, quality set-aside and ARRA. This coordinated effort allows Georgia to focus its resources for children and their families in a manner that promotes high quality services coupled with rigorous oversight and accountability.

c) **Describe** the results or expected results of this coordination. Discuss how these results relate to the development and implementation of the State/Territory's early learning guidelines, plans for professional development, and outcomes for children.

The expected result of this coordinated effort is to ensure that all preschool children enter school with the necessary skills and abilities to succeed in school. A broad range of services that help support the healthy development of children and their families is provided to accomplish these results.

The Georgia Early Care and Learning Professional Development System supports practitioners in the field of early care and education by providing quality professional development experiences. Nine levels of professional development based upon education and experience have been identified. The purpose of these levels is to inform early care and education practitioners of a path that will lead to further development. The Competencies, the Georgia Training Approval System, and the Professional Development Registry support this system. (Refer to Section 5.2.5.)

ARRA

Using ARRA funds, DECAL will revise and distribute an inclusive, seamless list of state content standards for children birth through five years of age that build on the Common Core State Standards for education. The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has joined the national Common Core State Standards Initiative to adopt the K-12 standards. Similarly, DECAL will revise and align the Georgia Early Learning Standards and the Pre-K Content Standards with the updated Georgia Kindergarten Performance Standards. The aligned birth through Pre-K standards will be incorporated into a seamless list of research- and evidence-based standards for educators and families. (Refer to Section 5.2.)

d) **Describe** how the State/Territory's plan supports, or will support, continued coordination among the programs. Are changes anticipated in the plan?

The Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) strategic plan supports a comprehensive early childhood service system that integrates the critical components of children having accessible medical/dental homes; mental health and social emotional resources; quality early care and education; and family support and education services. The ECCS strategic

plan identifies a set of core indicators for early childhood health and development in Georgia.

2.2 Public Hearing Process

Describe the Statewide/Territory-wide public hearing process held to provide the public an opportunity to comment on the provision of child care services under this Plan. (658D(b)(1)(C), §98.14(c)) At a minimum, the description must provide:

a) Date(s) of notice of public hearing: **4/8/09**

b) Manner of notifying the public about the public hearing:

A public notice was sent to newspapers around the state to announce public hearings would be held regarding Georgia's 2010-2011 CCDF State Plan. The notice included the web address that listed all the dates and sites of the hearings.

Child Care Resource and Referral agencies (CCR&R) and county DFCS offices received notice of the hearings and flyers to post that advertised the hearings. These agencies also received electronic versions of the draft of the plan to print and distribute as needed. Staff at the CCR&R agencies and DFCS offices were encouraged to inform parents, providers, and others interested in child care issues about the public hearings in their areas and that Spanish interpreters were scheduled to be available at the public hearings.

Letters and e-mails were sent to collaborative partners, government agencies, advocacy groups, etc. announcing the hearings. Attached to the e-mails was an electronic version of the draft of the state plan. The hearing notice and dates were also posted on the Childcare and Parent Services web site (<http://www.dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/caps>).

c) Date(s) of public hearing(s):

4/28/2009

4/29/2009

4/30/2009

5/1/2009

5/4/2009

5/5/2009

5/6/2009

d) Hearing site(s):

Albany, GA

Augusta, GA

Columbus, GA

Decatur, GA

Macon, GA

Norcross, GA
Savannah, GA

e) How the content of the plan was made available to the public in advance of the public hearing(s):

The hearing notices and flyers included the web address where a draft of the plan could be reviewed and also contact information to request a hard copy of the plan. The CCR&R agencies and local county DFCS offices received electronic versions of the draft of the plan to print and distribute as needed.

f) **Attach** a brief summary of the public comment process as **Attachment 2.2**.

2.3 Public-Private Partnerships

Does the Lead Agency conduct or plan to conduct activities to encourage public-private partnerships that promote private-sector involvement in meeting child care needs?

X Yes. If yes, **describe** these activities or planned activities, including the results or expected results.

Georgia continues to pursue creative approaches to involve the private sector in meeting child care needs. The State Child Care Unit established an advisory panel comprised of parents, child care providers, resource and referral staff, and child care staff from the state and county level. This collaboration affords parents and providers the opportunity to participate with a diverse group in decision-making regarding strategies to increase the availability, accessibility, and affordability of child care in Georgia prior to implementation.

In addition, DECAL promotes public-private sector collaboration on child care issues and encourages partnerships by:

- **Funding the statewide network of Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies. The CCR&Rs (www.gaccrra.org) expand partnerships through their outreach efforts in the communities where they are located. These efforts include corporate lunch- and-learns, work site exhibits, and presentations to educate and provide resources to help meet the child care needs of a company's employees. CCR&Rs schedule community advisory committee meetings where representatives from their region's corporate community provide advice, learn about resources, and offer other resources to support their communities. The expected result of these efforts is to provide a comprehensive and coordinated effort to serve the community.**
- **Partnering with and contracting with private child care learning centers to provide Pre-K services, 57% of the Georgia Pre-K Program providers are private. Georgia's Pre-K Program is offered free to all four-year-old children regardless of parental income. A variety of organizations provide Pre-K**

services, among them are private non-profit and for-profit child care learning centers, public and private elementary schools, Head Start sites, military bases, and postsecondary vocational-technical institutions. The public-private partnerships enable parents to choose the most appropriate settings for their children

- Promoting the state's corporate tax credit provisions (<http://www.georgia.org/Business/Child+Care+Tax+Credit.htm>), which allow companies to take 75% of their investment in employer-sponsored child care as a tax credit. The provision also allows companies to take as a tax credit 100% of their investment in construction of on-site facilities.

☐ No.

PART 3

CHILD CARE SERVICES OFFERED

3.1 Description of Child Care Services

3.1.1 Certificate Payment System. **Describe** the overall child care certificate process, including, at a minimum:

- a) a description of the form(s) of the certificate (§98.16(k)):

All counties utilized an automated system to authorize certificates for child care services. The certificates are computer-generated and provide the terms and conditions of the family's authorization for subsidized child care. This includes family information – name of the responsible adult and children who are subsidized; provider information - name, location, and type; and payment information - actual provider rate, state's reimbursement rate, the family's fee, and the family's share of the child care cost.

ARRA

Effective October 26, 2010, the State Child Care Unit utilized ARRA funds to create a new statewide time-limited child care program called Temporary Child Care Assistance (TCCA). The TCCA program is administered by the SCCU and implemented by Child Care Service Agents (CCSA). The CCSA are housed throughout the state and report directly to the SCCU.

Families participating in the TCCA program will be issued computer-generated certificates once they meet program requirements. The certificates provide the terms and conditions of the family's authorization for TCCA. This includes family information – name of the responsible adult and eligible children; provider information - name, location, and type; payment information - actual provider rate, state's reimbursement rate, and the remaining child care cost which is the family's responsibility. The TCCA

program is scheduled to end no later than September 30, 2010 but may end earlier if funding is exhausted.

- b) a description of how the certificate permits parents to choose from a variety of child care settings by explaining how a parent moves from receipt of the certificate to choice of the provider; (658E(c)(2)(A)(iii), 658P(2), §98.2, §98.30(c)(4) & (e)(1) & (2))

Parents/guardians may choose care from licensed or commissioned centers; licensed or commissioned group homes; registered family day care providers; legally exempt centers or group homes; neighbors, relatives or friends. Informal providers may care for the child in the provider's home. Care in the child's home is limited to relatives of the child. Relatives are defined as aunts, uncles, grandparents, great-grandparents, and adult siblings. (Adult siblings who are reimbursed for providing child care must live outside the child's home).

It is the parent/guardian/responsible person's responsibility to select the provider that best meets the family's child care needs. County caseworkers offer information to assist families in making informed child care choices. Case managers may also refer parents to the CCR&R system for assistance in selecting a child care provider. The family's choice of provider prevails if the provider meets all program, health, and safety, provider rules and compliance requirements.

The child care certificate is issued to the parent/guardian on the day that the family is determined eligible for services. A copy of the certificate is also sent to the selected provider. Registration fees are reimbursed up to a maximum of \$50 per child, per provider, per year. A private for-profit contractor manages payments to providers and related monitoring and compliance enforcement.

ARRA

Parents/guardians/responsible person participating in the TCCA program may choose child care providers who are licensed, commissioned, and legally exempt or registered by the state child care licensing agency.

It is the parent/guardian/responsible person's responsibility to select the provider that best meets the family's child care needs. The CCSA will offer information to assist families in making informed child care choices which includes referring them to the CCR&R system for assistance in selecting a child care provider. The family's choice of provider prevails if the provider meets all TCCA program requirements, health and safety requirements, provider rules and compliance requirements for both the state and DECAL.

A child care certificate is issued to the family once they are determined eligible for TCCA. A copy of the certificate is also sent to the selected

provider. Registration fees are reimbursed up to a maximum of \$50 per child, per provider, per year. A private for-profit contractor manages payments to providers and related monitoring and compliance enforcement.

c) if the Lead Agency is also providing child care services through grants and contracts, **estimate** the proportion of \$98.50 services available through certificates versus grants/contracts (this may be expressed in terms of dollars, number of slots, or percentages of services), and **explain** how the Lead Agency ensures that parents offered child care services are given the option of receiving a child care certificate. (§98.30(a) & (b)).

d) **Attach** a copy of your eligibility worker's manual, policy handbook, administrative rules or other printed guidelines for administering the child care subsidy program as **Attachment 3.1.1. and 3.1.1A for TCCA**

Note: If these materials are available on the web, the Lead Agency may provide the appropriate Web site address in lieu of attaching hard copies to the Plan.

3.1.2 In addition to offering certificates, does the Lead Agency also have grants or contracts for child care slots?

☒ **X** Yes, and **describe** the type(s) of child care services available through the grant or contract, the process for accessing grants or contracts, and the range of providers that will be available through grants or contracts: (658A(b)(1), 658P(4), §§98.16(g)(1), 98.30(a)(1) & (b))

The Lead Agency participates in a public/private partnership that targets five neighborhoods in Metro-Atlanta that have been identified as the Neighborhood Planning Unit –V (NPU-V). Many of Atlanta's most vulnerable families reside in the NPU-V. The Center for Working Families, Inc. (TCFWFI) is the non-profit intermediary created to serve families in the NPU-V by providing workforce training, financial education and work supports.

Effective January 2010, the Lead Agency will use CCDF to issue funds to TCFWFI to provide up to 196 child care slots for high quality child care to support adults living in the NPU-V who participate their job readiness program. This partnership is designed to help improve the economic success of adults living in the NPU-V by providing high quality child care to allow their participation in TCFWFI job readiness program. Also, this partnership will help children to be successful in school by placing them in high quality early learning environments and affording the community training and employment opportunities in the early learning career field.

☐ No.

3.1.3 Are child care services provided through certificates, grants and/or contracts offered throughout the State/Territory? (658E(a), §98.16(g)(3))

- ☒ Yes.
☐ No, and **identify** the localities (political subdivisions) and services that are not offered:

3.1.4 The Lead Agency must allow for in-home care (i.e., care provided in the child's own home) but may limit its use. Does the Lead Agency limit the use of in-home care in any way?

- ☒ Yes, and the limits and the reasons for those limits are (§§98.16(g)(2), 98.30(e)(1)(iv)):

Georgia permits relatives to care for children in the children's homes. These relatives must be grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts, uncles or adult siblings to the child. The adult siblings must reside outside of the child's home. Care in the child's home is limited to relative caregivers to comply with the requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

ARRA

Georgia limits the use of in-home care for children receiving child care through the TCCA program. Care in the child's home is limited to relatives who are licensed, commissioned, and legally exempt or registered by the state child care licensing agency (DECAL). This limitation is to comply with the requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

- ☐ No.

3.2 Payment Rates for the Provision of Child Care

The statute at 658E(c)(4) and the regulations at §98.43(b)(1) require the Lead Agency to establish payment rates for child care services that ensure eligible children equal access to comparable care.

3.2.1 Provide a copy of your payment rates as **Attachment 3.2.1**. The attached payment rates were or will be effective as of: **7/2006**

3.2.2 Are the attached payment rates provided in Attachment 3.2.1 used in all parts of the State/Territory?

- ☒ Yes.

- ☐ No, and other payment rates and their effective date(s) are provided as **Attachment 3.2.3.**

3.2.3 Provide a summary of the facts relied on by the State to determine that the attached rates are sufficient to ensure equal access to comparable child care services provided to children whose parents are not eligible to receive child care assistance under the CCDF and other governmental programs. Include, at a minimum:

- a) The month and year when the local market rate survey(s) was completed (§98.43(b)(2)): **6/2009**
- b) A copy of the **Market Rate Survey instrument** and a **summary of the results** of the survey are provided as **Attachment 3.2.3.** At a minimum, this summary should include a description of the sample population, data source, the type of methodology used, response rate, description of analyses, and key findings.

3.2.4 Does the Lead Agency use its **current** Market Rate Survey (a survey completed no earlier than 10/1/07) to set payment rates?

☐ Yes.

X No.

3.2.5 At what percentile of the **current** Market Rate Survey is the State payment rate ceiling set?

Note: If you do not use your current Market Rate Survey to set your rate ceilings or your percentile(s) varies across categories of care (e.g., type of setting, region, or age of children), **describe** and provide the range of variation in relation to your current survey.

In Georgia, rates for all providers were set at the 50th percentile of the 2005 Market Rate survey effective 7/2006 and have not been adjusted since that time. Provider rates in relation to the current Market Rate Survey range from the 42nd to the 50th percentile.

3.2.6 Describe the relationship between the attached payment rates and the market rates observed in the current survey, including at a minimum how payment rates are adequate to ensure equal access to the full range of providers based on the results of the above noted local market rate survey: (§98.43(b))

Georgia reimburses the DFCS portion of the cost of care directly to the providers. Some providers accept the reimbursement rate from DFCS without charging families additional amounts. This provides opportunities for equal access to child care services for parents who receive child care subsidies.

3.2.7 Does the Lead Agency consider any additional facts to determine that its payment rates ensure equal access? (§98.43(d))

☒ Yes. If, yes, **describe.**

Child care costs vary by the type of child care setting and the age group of the child. Rates are higher for infants and toddlers; moderate for preschoolers; and lower for school age children. In addition, rates are higher for children receiving center-based care and lower for children receiving care in family home based care.

Georgia has structured the reimbursements to providers so that care for infants and toddlers are reimbursed at the higher rates; for preschoolers at the moderate rates; and for school age children at the lower rate. Families are required to pay an assessed fee and any portion of the provider's rate that exceeds the DFCS rate directly to the provider.

☐ No.

3.2.8 Does the State have any type of tiered reimbursement or differential rates?

☒ Yes. If yes, **describe:**

Georgia has widely differential child care rates and divides the state into three payment "zones." In urban and suburban areas, the cost of care is higher than in small towns and in rural areas. Child care reimbursement rates are highest in the zone where the market rate has demonstrated that child care is most expensive. In addition, reimbursement for children with special needs or children in the custody of the state may be reimbursed at higher rates.

☒ No.

3.2.9 Describe how the Lead Agency ensures that payment rates do not exceed the amount paid by the general public for the same service. (§98.43(a))

Providers caring for children subsidized through the CAPS program must go through an enrollment process. As part of the enrollment process, providers are required to submit their published rates. These rates are entered into the automated provider payment system and compared to the rate quote the parents receive when they select the provider. Providers must also sign a rights and responsibility form indicating they understand they are not to charge children who are subsidized a different rate than non-subsidized children. All county DFCS offices keep copies of providers' current rate quote sheets.

ARRA

Providers caring for children subsidized through the TCCA program must go through an enrollment process. As part of the enrollment process, providers are required to submit their published rates. These rates are entered into the automated provider payment system and compared to the rate quote the parents receive when they select the provider. Providers must also sign a rights and responsibility form indicating they understand they are not to charge children who are subsidized a different rate than non-subsidized children. The state payment management agency will maintain files containing all required compliance documents for each provider.

3.3 Eligibility Criteria for Child Care

3.3.1 Age Eligibility

a) Does the Lead Agency allow CCDF-funded child care for children above age 13 but below age 19 who are physically and/or mentally incapable of self-care? (658E(c)(3)(B), 658P(3), §98.20(a)(1)(ii))

- ☒ Yes. If yes, **define** physical and mental incapacity in Appendix 2, and **provide** the upper age limit **18**
- ☐ No.

b) Does the Lead Agency allow CCDF-funded child care for children above age 13 but below age 19 who are under court supervision? (658P(3), 658E(c)(3)(B), §98.20(a)(1)(ii))

- ☒ Yes, and the upper age is **18**
- ☐ No.

3.3.2 Income Eligibility

Complete columns (a) and (b) in Table 3.3.2 below based upon initial entry into the CCDF program. Complete Columns (c) and (d) **ONLY IF** the Lead Agency is using income eligibility limits lower than 85% of the SMI.

Table 3.3.2 Income Eligibility

Family Size	(a) 100 % of State Median Income (SMI) (\$/month)	(b) 85 % of State Median Income (SMI) (\$/month) [Multiply (a) by 0.85]	IF APPLICABLE	
			Income Level if lower than 85 % SMI	
			(c) \$/month	(d) % of SMI [Divide (c) by (a), multiply by 100]
1	\$2,619	\$2,226	\$1,733	66 %
2	\$3,425	\$2,912	\$2,333	68 %
3	\$4,231	\$3,597	\$2,933	69 %
4	\$5,037	\$4,282	\$3,533	70 %
5	\$5,843	\$4,967	\$4,133	71 %

Note: Table 3.3.2 should reflect maximum eligibility upon initial entry into the CCDF program.

Georgia links eligibility for child care to the federal poverty level (FPL). Families are considered income eligible if their applicable income is equal to or below 200% of the 2008 FPL. (The Lead Agency uses Federal Register, Federal Register, Vol. 73, No. 15, January 23, 2008, pp. 3971–3972.)

ARRA

Table 3.3.2-A Income Eligibility- Temporary Child Care Assistance (TCCA)

Family Size	(a) 100 % of State Median Income (SMI) (\$/month)	(b) 85 % of State Median Income (SMI) (\$/month) [Multiply (a) by 0.85]	IF APPLICABLE	
			Income Level, lower than 85 % SMI, if used to limit eligibility	
			(c) \$/month	(d) % of SMI [Divide (c) by (a), multiply by 100]
1	\$2,619	\$2,226	\$1,733	66 %
2	\$3,425	\$2,912	\$2,333	68 %
3	\$4,231	\$3,597	\$2,933	69 %
4	\$5,037	\$4,282	\$3,533	70 %
5	\$5,843	\$4,967	\$4,133	71 %

Note: Table 3.3.2-A reflects the maximum eligibility upon initial entry into the TCCA program.

Georgia links eligibility for child care to the federal poverty level (FPL). Families are considered income eligible for TCCA if their applicable income

is equal to or below 200% of the 2008 FPL. (The Lead Agency uses Federal Register, Federal Register, Vol. 73, No. 15, January 23, 2008, pp. 3971–3972.)

a) Does the Lead Agency have “tiered eligibility” (i.e., a separate income limit for remaining eligible for the CCDF program)?

☐ Yes. If yes, **provide** the requested information from Table 3.3.2 and **describe**. **Note:** This information can be included in a separate table, or by placing a “/” between the entry and exit levels in the above table.

X No.

b) If the Lead Agency does not use the SMI from the most current year, **indicate** the year used:

c) These eligibility limits in column (c) became or will become effective on:

January 1, 2010

ARRA

October 26, 2009 – TCCA

d) How does the Lead Agency define “income” for the purposes of eligibility? **Provide** the Lead Agencies definition of “income” for purposes of eligibility determination. (§§98.16(g)(5), 98.20(b))

Georgia links income eligibility for child care to the federal poverty level (FPL). Families are considered income eligible if their gross (pre-tax) applicable income is equal to or below 200% of the FPL. This includes income earned from work/employment, including base pay, tips, commissions, piece rate payments, and cash bonuses prior to deductions. Garnishments and unearned income, such as child support are also included when considering gross income. (The Lead Agency uses Federal Register, Vol. 73, No. 15, January 23, 2008, pp. 3971–3972.)

ARRA

Georgia links income eligibility for TCCA to the federal poverty level (FPL). Families are considered income eligible if their gross (pre-tax) applicable income is equal to or below 200% of the 2008 FPL. This includes income earned from work/employment, including base pay, tips, commissions, piece rate payments, and cash bonuses prior to deductions. Garnishments and unearned income, such as Social Security, alimony and disability payments are also included when considering gross income. (The Lead Agency uses Federal Register, Vol. 73, No. 15, January 23, 2008, pp. 3971–3972)

e) Is any income deducted or excluded from total family income (e.g., work or medical expenses; child support paid to, or received from, other households; Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments)?

☒ Yes. If yes, **describe** what type of income is deducted or excluded from total family income.

Income from TANF, SSI, Adoption Subsidy, Housing Assistance, or a child under the age of eighteen is not included when calculating the family's gross income.

See Attachment 3.3.2 and 3.3.2A, identified as Applicable and Non-Applicable Income for a detailed description of the applicable incomes that are included and the non-applicable incomes that are excluded from computation of gross income in subsidized child care.

☐ No.

d) **Describe** whose income is excluded for purposes of eligibility determination.

The income of family members from TANF, SSI, Adoption Subsidy, Housing Assistance, or a child under the age of eighteen is not included when calculating the family's gross income. See Attachment 3.3.2 and 3.3.2 A, (Applicable and Non-Applicable Income) for a detailed description of the incomes that are included and incomes that are excluded from computation of monthly gross income in subsidized child care.

3.3.3 Work/Job Training or Educational Program Eligibility

a) How does the Lead Agency define "working" for the purposes of eligibility? **Describe** the specific activities that are considered "working" for purposes of eligibility determination, including minimum number of hours. (§§98.16(f)(6), 98.20(b))

The Lead Agency defines working for the purpose of eligibility as regular and predictable activities performed for no less than an average of twenty-four hours per week in exchange for at least the federal minimum wage. These activities include employment and self-employment. There are some exceptions to this requirement. Please refer Attachment 3.1.1 Section 6101.

However, individuals currently participating in the CAPS program whose hours are reduced may continue to receive subsidies if they work at least an average twenty-two hours per week. In addition, individuals currently participating in the CAPS program that lose their job because of company closures or lay-offs may continue to receive child care for up to eight weeks to job search for new employment.

ARRA

For **initial** eligibility determination in the TCCA program, “working only” is not considered an approved activity unless individuals are underemployed. Underemployed is defined as working between 15 – 23 hours per week and earning below 200% of the federal poverty level. All other individuals must meet participation requirements in an approved post-secondary, job readiness, vocational or training program to receive child care services.

b) Does the Lead Agency provide CCDF child care assistance to parents who are attending job training or an educational program?

X Yes. If yes, how does the Lead Agency define “attending job training or educational program” for the purposes of eligibility? **Describe**, the specific activities that are considered “job training and/or educational program”, including minimum number of hours.
(§§98.16(f)(3), 98.20(b))

The Lead Agency defines attending an educational program as full time enrollment, as defined by the institution, in an approved educational program. Approved educational programs include middle school, high school, and GED programs. Minor parents and adults under the age of twenty-one, meet the hourly activity requirement as long as they maintain full time enrollment and attend an approved program. However, all other adults must meet the minimum hourly participation requirement which is an average of twenty-four hours per week.

The Lead Agency defines attending job training as enrollment in a vocational program leading to a specific job or career. This does not include correspondence courses, online courses, or degree programs. Individuals must participate in an approved training program or a combination of training and other approved activities that meet at least the minimum hourly participation requirement. Job training is time-limited to 12 months as a primary activity.

ARRA

Job Readiness/Training

In the TCCA program, the Lead Agency defines job training as any structured or facilitated program designed to provide job preparedness skills. Job training is limited to 12 weeks and the organization providing the job training must be authorized by the State.

If individuals exhaust the 12 week time limit without finding employment or enrolling full time in an approved vocational/technical

or post secondary education program, child care services may be terminated. However, if the participant finds employment earning at least the federal minimum wage and the family's total income does not exceed the maximum income limit, the family can continue to receive child care for a time to be determined by the CCSA based on the participant's activity and program funding.

Educational Program

In the TCCA program, the Lead Agency defines educational programs as full or part time enrollment in any accredited post-secondary institution, vocational or training program that will lead to a degree, certificate or specific job skill. On-line only educational programs are not supported in the TCCA program. The educational institution defines full and part time enrollment. Individuals must verify they are maintaining a minimum grade point average of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale; or satisfactory progress if the 4.0 scale is not utilized. If the individual's grade point average falls below 2.0 or is unsatisfactory, child care services may be terminated.

If individuals find employment working at least 15 hours per week, earning at least the federal minimum wage and the family's income does not exceed the maximum income limit, the family can continue to receive child care for a time to be determined by the CCSA and the availability of funds.

☐ No.

3.3.4 Eligibility Based Upon Receiving or Needing to Receive Protective Services

a) Does the Lead Agency provide child care to children in protective services? (§§98.16(f)(7), 98.20(a)(3)(ii)(A) & (B))

X Yes. If yes, **provide** a definition of "protective services" in Appendix 2. Does the Lead Agency waive, on a case-by-case basis, the co-payment and income eligibility requirements for cases in which children receive, or need to receive, protective services? (658E(c)(3)(B), 658P(3)(C)(ii), §98.20(a)(3)(ii)(A))

X Yes.
☐ No.

☐ No.

ARRA

The TCCA program is not designed to serve children in protective services. Families with children in protective services will continue to receive priority services through the CAPS program.

b) Does the Lead Agency provide CCDF-funded child care to children in foster care whose foster care parents are not working, or who are not in education/training activities? (§§98.20(a)(3)(ii), 98.16(f)(7))

☐ Yes. (**NOTE:** This means that for CCDF purposes the Lead Agency considers these children to be in protective services.)

X No.

3.3.5 Additional Conditions for Determining CCDF Eligibility

Has the Lead Agency established any additional eligibility conditions for determining CCDF eligibility? (658E(c)(3)(B), §98.16(g)(5), §98.20(b))

X Yes, and the additional eligibility conditions are: (Terms must be defined in Appendix 2)

In January 2006, all children who receive subsidies through the CAPS program were required to be a United States citizen or have established United States citizenship or immigration status as a lawfully admitted qualified alien. Only the children being subsidized are required to have their citizenship or alien status verified. The parent, guardian, or responsible person's statement indicating their U.S. citizenship or alien status is accepted as their proof of citizenship.

ARRA

The TCCA program requires all children who are approved for child care to be a United States citizen; or have established United States citizenship; or immigration status as a lawfully admitted qualified alien. Only the citizenship or alien status of the children must be verified. The parent, guardian, or responsible person's statement indicating their U.S. citizenship or alien status is accepted as their proof of citizenship.

☐ No.

3.4 Priorities for Serving Children and Families

3.4.1 At a minimum, CCDF requires Lead Agencies to give priority for child care services to children with special needs, or in families with very low incomes. **Complete** Table 3.4.1 below regarding eligibility priority rules. For columns (a) through (c), **check** only one box if reply is "Yes". Leave blank if "No". **Complete** column (e) only if you check column (d).

Table 3.4.1 Priorities for Serving Children

	How does the Lead Agency prioritize the eligibility categories in Column 1?			CHECK ONLY IF APPLICABLE	
	CHECK ONLY ONE				
Eligibility Categories	(a) Priority over other CCDF-eligible families	(b) Same priority as other CCDF-eligible families	(c) Guaranteed subsidy eligibility	(d) Is there a time limit on the priority or guarantee?	(e) How long is time limit?
Children with special needs*	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Children in families with very low incomes*	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Families transitioning from TANF	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	X	12 Months
Families at risk of becoming dependent on TANF	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

* **Required**

3.4.2 Describe how the Lead Agency prioritizes service for the following CCDF-eligible children: (a) children with special needs, (b) children in families with very low incomes, and (c) other. Terms must be defined in Appendix 2. (658E(c)(3)(B))

Georgia has established service priorities to ensure that certain families, if eligible, are not placed on a waiting list and receive subsidized child care without regards to funding.

Families who receive service priorities are:

- **Children who have special needs as defined by the State;**
- **TANF applicants/recipients who are meeting participation requirements as listed on the TANF Family Service Plan;**

- **TANF applicants/recipients whose TANF is denied or terminated for employment related reasons who need transitional child care;**
- **Families with a critical active child protective services (CPS) case and child care addresses eminent risk as determined by CPS staff;**
- **Children under court-ordered supervision;**
- **Children in DFCS custody if the responsible adult is meeting participation requirements and child care from a free funding source is not available;**
- **Minor parents attending middle school, high school, or GED programs full time as defined by the institution;**
- **Adults 18-21 attending high school full time as defined by the institution;**
- **Grandparents raising grandchildren under age 5 who are 60+ or under age 60 receiving SSI or RSDI disability and receiving TANF payee/child only for their grandchildren under age 5;**
- **New children in an existing CAPS case except siblings to a Pre-K only child when no other children in the family are being served;**
- **Families who are victims of a natural disaster as defined by the State.**

ARRA

The TCCA program does not have priority services for child care. All eligible families will be served as long as funds are available.

3.4.3 Describe how CCDF funds will be used to meet the needs of: (a) families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), (b) those attempting to transition off TANF through work activities, and (c) those at risk of becoming dependent on TANF. (658E(c)(2)(H), Section 418(b)(2) of the Social Security Act, §§98.50(e), 98.16(g)(4))

Georgia requires all adults included in a TANF grant to participate in employment services unless they meet the exemption criteria. Child care is available to all TANF applicants and recipients when needed to participate in a work activity.

Families leaving TANF for employment related reasons can receive transitional child care for up to one year if they continue to meet program requirements. After one year of transitional care, they can continue to receive subsidized child care as long as funds are available and they meet program requirements.

In addition, TANF eligible families who choose not to use their TANF months can receive child care if they are working as long as funds are available and they meet program requirements. These families are diverted from applying for TANF and can save their TANF months for a later time.

Families who are at risk of becoming dependent on TANF can receive subsidized care if funds are available and they meet program requirements. Often families are referred to other resources, such as Pre-K sites, Head

Start sites, and their local child care resource and referral agency. The local child care resource and referral agencies links families with programs that meet their needs.

ARRA

The TCCA program will refer TANF families to the CAPS program where they will receive priority services for child care.

3.4.4 Has the Lead Agency established additional priority rules that are not reflected in the table completed for Section 3.4.1? (658E(c)(3)(B), §98.16(g)(5), §98.20(b))

☒ Yes, and the additional priority rules are: **(Terms must be listed and defined in Appendix 2)**

- Families with a critical active child protective services (CPS) case and child care addresses eminent risk as determined by CPS staff;
- Children under court-ordered supervision case;
- Children in DFCS custody if the responsible adult is meeting participation requirements and child care from a free funding source is not available;
- Minor parents attending middle school, high school, or GED programs full time as defined by the institution;
- Adults 18-21 attending high school full time as defined by the institution;
- Grandparents raising grandchildren under age 5 who are 60+ or under 60 receiving SSI or RSDI disability and receiving TANF payee/child only for their grandchildren under age 5.
- New children in an existing CAPS case except siblings to a Pre-K only child when no other children in the family are being served
- Families who are victims of a natural disaster as defined by the State

☐ No.

ARRA

The TCCA program does not have priority services for child care. All eligible families will be served as long as funds are available.

3.4.5 Does the Lead Agency serve all eligible families that apply?

☐ Yes.

☒ No.

3.4.6 Does the Lead Agency have a waiting list of eligible families that they are unable to serve?

☒ Yes. If yes, **describe**. At a minimum, the description should indicate:

a) Whether the waiting list is maintained for all eligible families or for certain populations?

b) Whether the waiting list is maintained for the entire State/Territory or for individual localities?

b) What methods are employed to keep the list current?

All families seeking subsidized child care are screened at county DFCS offices to determine if they meet the criteria for priority services (see section 3.4.1). Families meeting the priority services criteria are not placed on a waiting list. Families who do not meet the criteria for priority services are placed on a waiting list if funds are not available. Families are provided information on community resources and child care alternatives at the state and county level.

As funds become available, eligible families placed on the waiting list are contacted in chronological order, on a first-come, first-serve basis. Some families may be referred to local Resource and Referral agencies for information about other placements that offer scholarships or reduced fees based on a sliding income scale.

Each county DFCS office is responsible for monitoring and managing their waiting list. This data is also reviewed at the state level. To keep waiting list current, staff in the county DFCS offices routinely purge their waiting list.

☐ No.

ARRA

Currently, a waiting list for child care services is not maintained in the TCCA program. All eligible families will be served as long as funds are available. Once funds have been exhausted the program will not be available for new services. The public will be notified via the website for any new applicants.

3.5 Sliding Fee Scale for Child Care Services

3.5.1 The statute and regulations require Lead Agencies to establish a sliding fee scale that varies based on income and the size of the family to be used in determining each family's contribution (co-payment) to the cost of child care (\$98.42).

a) **Attach** the sliding fee scale as **Attachment 3.5.1**.

b) **Describe** how the sliding fee scale is administered, including how the family's contribution is determined and how the co-payment is assessed and collected:

c) The attached sliding fee scale was or will be effective as of **10-1-2007**.

d) Does the Lead Agency use other factors in addition to income and family size to determine each family's contribution to the cost of child care? (658E(c)(3)(B), §98.42(b))

☒ Yes, and **describe** those additional factors:

In addition to the family's gross annual income and family size, the Lead Agency also determines the family's contribution to the cost of care (assessed fee) based on the number of children actually receiving subsidized child care. Families with the same gross income and family size will have different assessed fees if they request subsidies for a different number of children. For example, two families containing two adults and three children have the same gross income. One family requests subsidies for two children and the other family request subsidies for three children. The assessed family fee would be higher for the family with three children needing subsidies than for the family with two children. The assessed fee is a family fee, not a "per child" fee and is capped after the sixth child.

ARRA

Families are not assessed a family fee in the TCCA program. This program is designed to assist families participating in vocational, technical training or post secondary educational programs. The TCCA program is time-limited and will end on September 30, 2010.

☐ No.

3.5.2 Is the sliding fee scale provided as Attachment 3.5.1 used in all parts of the State? (658E(c)(3)(B))

☒ Yes.

☐ No, and other scale(s) and their effective date(s) are provided as **Attachment 3.5.2.**

3.5.3 The Lead Agency may waive contributions from families whose incomes are at or below the poverty level for a family of the same size, (§98.42(c)), and the poverty level used by the Lead Agency for a family of 3 is: **\$35,200.00**

The Lead Agency must **select ONE** of these options:

- ☐ ALL families with income at or below the poverty level for a family of the same size ARE NOT required to pay a fee.
- ☐ ALL families, including those with incomes at or below the poverty level for families of the same size, ARE required to pay a fee.
- ☒ SOME families with income at or below the poverty level for a family of the same size ARE NOT required to pay a fee. **Describe** these families:

Fees are not assessed when the:

- **children receiving care are in DFCS custody;**
- **TANF applicant/recipient participates in an approved state activity;**
- **family's income is less than \$3,601.00;**
- **responsible person is a minor parent (under age 18)**
- **family receives TCCA**

3.5.4 Does the Lead Agency allow providers to charge parents the difference between the maximum reimbursement rate and their private pay rate?

☒ Yes.
☐ No.

3.5.5 Describe how the co-payments required by the Lead Agency's sliding fee scale(s) are affordable: (§98.43(b)(3))

Family co-payments are based on the family's gross annual income, family size, and the number of children actually receiving subsidized child care. The co-payments for eligible families range from 8% - 15% of the families gross annual income. Families with a responsible adult applying or receiving TANF are not assessed a fee. Additionally, families with a gross annual income less than \$3,601 and minor parents are not required to pay a fee.

ARRA

Families are not assessed a family fee in the TCCA program. This program is targeted at families who are not employed and were most impacted by the economic downturn. The TCCA program is designed to provide assistance to families who are unemployed, underemployed and participating in vocational, technical training or post secondary educational programs. Families who find a job can continue to receive child care if they remain within the income limits. The TCCA program is time-limited and will end September 30, 2010.

PART 4 PARENTAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Application Process / Parental Choice

4.1.1 Describe the process for a family to apply for and receive child care services (658D(b)(1)(A), 658E(c)(2)(D) & (3)(B), §98.16(k), 98.30(a) through (e)). At minimum, describe:

- a) How parents are informed of the availability of child care services under CCDF (i.e., parental choice of child care services through a certificate or grant of contract)
- b) How parents can apply for CCDF services
- c) What documentation parents provide as part of their application to determine eligibility
- d) How parents who receive TANF benefits are informed about the exception to individual penalties as described in 4.4
- e) What steps the Lead Agency has taken to reduce barriers to initial and continuing eligibility for child care subsidies
- f) **Attach** a copy of your parent application for the child care subsidy program as **Attachment 4.1.1.**

Families are informed of their child care options and their eligibility for the CAPS program by case managers in the county DFCS offices. The DFCS web site, <http://www.dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/caps>, also provides information about the subsidized child care program and contact information for county DFCS offices. Social Service Case Managers also inform families of the availability of subsidized child care. Additionally, child care resource and referral agencies distribute pamphlets, literature, and child care information to families.

The majority of families seeking subsidized child care services complete an inquiry/screening form to determine their potential eligibility and priority status. Families who meet the criteria for priority services complete an application and are not placed on a waiting list. However, if funds are not available to serve new children, families who do not meet the criteria for priority services do not complete an application and are placed on a waiting list. Applications for subsidized child care are not available online but are made available in each county DFCS office.

The Lead Agency is developing a process that will allow families to complete the inquiry/screening form online. This process will improve access to subsidized child care by allowing families to be screened for priority services and have their eligibility assessed without visiting the county DFCS office.

Child care case managers determine eligibility based on the need for care (an eligible child is in the home and the responsible person's activity participation), income and residency. Families must provide documentation of their income and verification that all children needing subsidized child care meet citizenship requirements. Additionally, families must provide documentation that each responsible adult required to participate in a state approved activity meets participation requirements. For example, working

responsible adults must provide documentation of their wages and work hours; enrollment and attendance hours in school or training programs.

Families can choose their own child care providers. The choice is limited if the provider selected has an active child protective services case, or does not meet state regulatory or health and safety requirements. DFCS case managers assist families in choosing child care services that meet their needs upon the families' request. Child care resource and referral agencies also offer assistance to families.

TANF applicants or recipients who need child care to participate in state approved employment, training or education activities receive priority child care services when funds are limited and are not placed on a waiting list.

The TANF/Employment Services case manager is responsible for informing single custodial parents that they may be exempt from work requirements if they have a child less than 12 months of age in their care. Similarly, the TANF/Employment Services case manager is responsible for informing single custodial parents with children under six years of age that they cannot be sanctioned for failing to work if they cannot locate accessible, affordable, appropriate child care services. Georgia has had no reports of single custodial parents who have been unable to obtain accessible, affordable and appropriate child care for a child under 6 years of age.

Families are certified for the CAPS program for up to one year. The case manager monitors each case annually to ensure continued eligibility. A waiver process is in place to allow certain eligibility criteria to be waived, on a case by case basis, for a set period of time. Families can also mail in documentation of income and other appropriate documents. These processes reduce barriers and allow families to comply with program requirements without taking time off from work or other approved activities.

ARRA

The CAPS program and the TCCA program will operate concurrently but separately in service delivery and in the automated provider payment system. The TCCA program was designed to assist parents who would normally not qualify for subsidized child care through the CAPS program. Families can apply online or call a toll free number to receive a paper application by mail. Families are not required to visit an office or have a face to face interview to apply for TCCA.

All applications for TCCA will be processed by Child Care Service Agents (CCSA) using policy specific to the program. (Refer to Attachment 3.1.1A) The CCSA will determine eligibility based on the need for care (an eligible child is in the home and the responsible person's activity participation), income and residency. Families must provide documentation (by mail, fax or email) of their income and verification that all children needing subsidized

child care meet citizenship requirements. Additionally, families must provide documentation that each responsible adult required to participate in a state approved activity meets participation requirements.

Families were notified of the program through letters to a target population who received public assistance, a marketing campaign to the general public that consisted of meetings in faith-based facilities and distribution of literature and brochures. Information about the TCCA program and the application process was also placed on the CAPS and provider payment website at <http://www.dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/caps>.

Families can choose their own child care providers. The family's choice of provider prevails unless the provider does not meet all TCCA program and state child care licensing requirements. The CSSA will assist families with resources to select child care services that meet their needs upon the families' request including referrals to child care resource and referral agencies. The CSSA is responsible for monitoring each TCCA case to ensure the family's continued eligibility.

These processes are expected to increase access to subsidized child care by reducing barriers that restrict the application process to a specific time or location and require participants to take time off from their approved activities.

4.1.2 Is the application process different for families receiving TANF?

☐ Yes, and **describe** how the process is different:

☒ No.

4.1.3 What is the length of eligibility period upon initial authorization of CCDF services?

The period of eligibility upon initial authorization is up to one year depending on the activity of the responsible person.

ARRA

The period of eligibility upon initial authorization for the TCCA program will be determined by the CCSA based on the participant's approved activity. However, the authorization period can not exceed 9/30/10.

a) Is the initial authorization for eligibility the same for all CCDF eligible families?

☒ Yes.

☐ No and **describe** any variations that relate to the services provided (e.g., through collaborations with Head Start or pre-kindergarten programs or differences for TANF families):

4.1.4 Describe how the Lead Agency ensures that parents are informed about their ability to choose from among family child care and group home child care, center-based care and in-home care, including faith-based providers in each of these categories.

Child care case managers encourage customers to consider various types of child care options (center based, family home child care, informal care, etc.) in the community based on the type of care and the amount of care needed by the family. The customer will then choose a provider who best meet the needs of their child(ren).

Child care case managers also inform customers of other resources that may be available, such as Early Head Start, Head Start, Georgia's Pre-K program, and after school programs in public schools or city recreation departments, etc. Child care case managers may refer clients to local child care resource and referral agencies to obtain information about providers in their area and the provider's rate.

4.1.5 Describe how the Lead Agency reaches out and provides services to eligible families with limited English proficiency, including how the Lead Agency overcomes language barriers with families and providers.

DHS contracts with a private agency to provide a language line that offers interpreters; translators; and other necessary communicative resources to families with limited English proficiency. These services are available statewide in local county DFCS offices. In addition to these services, the child care application and other forms have been translated into Spanish.

4.2 Records of Parental Complaints

Describe how the Lead Agency maintains a record of substantiated parental complaints about providers and makes substantiated parental complaints available to the public on request. (658E(c)(2)(C), §98.32))

State law requires the state licensing agency, DECAL, to investigate complaints of all regulatory violations in family day care homes, group day care homes, child care learning centers, in child care programs that are exempt from licensure, and programs that may be operating illegally.

When there are rule violations and pending adverse action, the legal action could include revoking or suspending the facility's license to operate, requiring restrictions such as limiting admission, or imposing a civil monetary penalty.

DECAL maintains information regarding complaint investigations in state licensure files. Under the provisions of the Georgia Open Records Law, O.C.G.A. Sections 50-18-70 through 50-18-77, this information is available to the public. State and federal laws consider all licensure files open records except for that specific information

otherwise protected. Persons may review files by appointment. The request can be made in writing or by telephone followed with a written request.

DECAL posts reports of the recent monitoring visits to child care programs on the internet (<http://dec.al.ga.gov/CCS/CCSMMain.aspx>). Families can access the site, enter the name of the child care program and other identifying information to view the recent inspections. Information about rule violations and adverse actions are also posted on this web site.

DECAL also provides a “Consultant of the Day” who is available from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. to provide parents and other interested individuals verbal information regarding the licensure history of a child care facility.

ARRA

Using ARRA funds, DECAL has initiated a project that will streamline the oversight and monitoring of child care facilities by replacing manual paper processes in Child Care Services with online accessibility to relevant information. This enhanced online accessibility will provide parents with additional information to locate quality child care.

4.3 Unlimited Access to Children in Child Care Settings

Provide a detailed description of the Lead Agency procedures for affording parents unlimited access to their children whenever their children are in the care of a provider who receives CCDF funds. (658E(c)(2)(B), §98.31))

State licensing and registration rules require unlimited access by parents to their children while in child care settings. Rules require that a sign be posted in a public place stating that parents have access to all child care areas.

Informal providers, who are not required to be licensed or registered, are also required to allow parents unlimited access to their children. DFCS notifies informal providers of this requirement during enrollment.

4.4 Criteria or Definitions Applied by TANF Agency to Determine Inability to Obtain Child Care

The regulations at §98.33(b) require the Lead Agency to inform parents who receive TANF benefits about the exception to the individual penalties associated with the work requirement for any single custodial parent who has a demonstrated inability to obtain needed child care for a child under 6 years of age.

In fulfilling this requirement, the following criteria or definitions are applied by the TANF agency to determine whether the parent has a demonstrated inability to obtain needed child care:

NOTE: The TANF agency, not the Child Care Lead Agency, is responsible for establishing the following criteria or definitions. These criteria or definitions are offered in this Plan as a matter of public record. The TANF agency that established these criteria or definitions is:

The DFCS State TANF Unit in consultation with the DFCS Child Care Unit.

- "appropriate child care":

Care that meets the state's licensing/minimum health and safety standards, is available, and meets the needs of the family and child.

- "reasonable distance":

Care that is within a forty-five minute radius of the parent's home or work activity.

- "unsuitability of informal child care":

Care that does not meet the state's licensing/minimum health and safety standards.

- "affordable child care arrangements":

Care in which the state participates at a minimum of 50% of the cost of care for the family and the provider accepts up to the maximum DFCS rate.

PART 5

ACTIVITIES & SERVICES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND AVAILABILITY OF CHILD CARE

5.1 Quality Targeted Funds and Set-Asides

Federal appropriations law has targeted portions of the CCDF for quality improvement and for services for infants and toddlers, child care resource and referral (CCR&R) and school-age child care. For each targeted fund, provide the following information.

DHS is the Lead Agency to receive CCDF. However, DECAL, by state law, is responsible for administering the CCDF quality set-aside and targeted funds. DECAL administers the Infant/Toddler Earmark and the School-Age Care/Child Care Resource and Referral Earmark by working collaboratively with other state agencies and organizations to develop a comprehensive system of early care and education.

DECAL is the state agency charged with developing and maintaining a comprehensive system of early care and education. This system includes the governance and an infrastructure that will build the capacity of the state and its schools and communities to prepare children to succeed in school.

DECAL, by state law, is also responsible for licensing child care programs; administering Georgia's Pre-K Program; administering the Title I Even Start Family Literacy program; and coordinating statewide early care and education initiatives in order to obtain a more streamlined early care and education system in Georgia. In addition, DECAL houses the Head Start Collaboration Office and oversees the federal CACFP and the SFSP.

5.1.1 Infants and Toddlers:

Note: For the infant and toddler targeted funds, the Lead Agency must **provide** the maximum age of a child who may be served with such targeted funds (not to exceed 36 months).

- a) **Describe** the activities provided with these targeted funds

Georgia Early Learning Standards -

<http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/CCS/CCSServices.aspx?Header=67&SubHeader=&Position=18&HeaderName=Georgia%20Early%20Learning%20Standards>

DECAL, in partnership with early care and education entities within the state, is refining the early learning standards for children birth through three years of age. The standards answer the question, "What should children from birth through three years of age know or be able to do?" The standards are aligned with the Pre-K Content Standards, which align with the Georgia Department of Education's Kindergarten standards, creating a seamless system of learning from birth through grade 12. This seamless system of learning standards is the foundation for building a comprehensive and coordinated state system for school readiness.

Infant and Toddler Network -

DECAL is developing an Infant and Toddler Network to ensure that comprehensive, high quality services for infants, toddlers, and their families are coordinated. DECAL has secured technical assistance from Zero to Three and, with broad representation of stakeholders, identified Georgia's strengths and needs regarding 0-3 services and completed a gap analysis.

To address the gap analysis recommendations, all early care and education programs (child care learning centers, group day care homes, and family day care homes) serving infants and toddlers will be identified and listed. A minimum of 20 different infant and toddler providers who need assistance in complying with licensing/registration standards will receive on-site and/or telephone technical assistance and mentoring quarterly.

ARRA

Using ARRA funds, DECAL is planning to enhance the nascent Infant and Toddler Network. DECAL will establish training requirements and train 80 DECAL, CCR&R, and college/university teaching professionals on the Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC). DECAL will contract with seven to twelve infant/toddler specialists to provide infant/toddler technical assistance to child care programs statewide. The project will include an evaluation phase to measure the effectiveness of the training and the technical assistance in the infant/toddler child care settings.

b) **Identify** the entities providing the activities

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is the state agency responsible for administering the state's CCDF Infant/Toddler targeted funds.

c) **Describe** the expected results of the activities.

The activities are expected to promote positive relationships and quality learning experiences for infants in toddlers in child care settings.

5.1.2 Resource and Referral Services:

a) **Describe** the activities provided with these targeted funds

Child Care Resource and Referral Services- www.gaccrra.org

DECAL is mandated by state law to “promote consumer education to parents to help them select child care through the expansion of child care resource and referral agencies.” Georgia’s child care resource and referral system provides high-quality, family friendly consumer education and referrals; develops and maintains a computer database for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data; builds upon and supports the system of early care and education, including school age care; and develops local partnerships.

Through a competitive bid process, DECAL awards and manages the state contracts with each of the child care resource and referral agencies (CCR&R). A network of six child care resource and referral agencies serves all 159 counties in the state. One agency operates the statewide Child Care Resource and Referral Center to provide parent resource and referral services through the operation of a call center and website where consumers can access information online at www.allgakis.org. The Child Care Resource and Referral Center links families to providers. The center provides referrals for parents who are seeking child care for typically developing children as well as inclusive environments for children with special needs.

Each regional CCR&R supports the improvement of quality, availability, and affordability of child care. The regional CCR&Rs provide training, technical assistance, and quality improvement funds for child care professionals working with young children in their homes, group homes or child care learning centers. In addition, the regional CCR&Rs furnish services to families and providers to ensure that children with special needs are included along with typically developing children in child care settings. In working to accomplish its mission, each CCR&R collaborates with early childhood and school age programs to meet the needs of children and families in their regions.

b) **Identify** the entities providing the activities

DECAL is the state agency responsible for administering the state's CCDF Resource and Referral Earmark. DECAL administers a competitive bid process to award contracts with agencies to provide child care resource and referral services. The following agencies received contracts to provide CCR&R services: Darton College; Medical College of Georgia; Quality Care for Children, Inc., and Savannah Technical College.

c) **Describe** the expected results of the activities.

As a result of these activities, it is expected that the quality of child care will improve through the provision of technical assistance and training to early child care and education professionals and child care providers. In addition, it is expected that families receiving referrals and consumer education will report satisfaction with the child care resource and referral services delivered.

5.1.3 School-Age Child Care:

a) **Describe** the activities provided with these targeted funds

DECAL administers contracts to purchase services that will increase the capacity, supply and quality of services for school-age children by providing accreditation facilitation services (e.g. technical assistance, mentoring, and training) to programs seeking to achieve national accreditation. Each participating program will achieve measurable quality improvements.

b) **Identify** the entities providing the activities

DECAL is the state agency responsible for administering the state's School-Age Child Care targeted funds. DECAL administers a competitive bid process to award contracts for services for school-age care programs. The following agencies receive funding to provide accreditation facilitation services to programs that serve school age children: Darton College; the Georgia School Age Care Association; Medical College of Georgia; Quality Care for Children, Inc., and Savannah Technical College.

Describe the expected results of the activities.

As a result of these activities, it is expected that the quality of school age care will improve through the provision of technical assistance and training to the school age care programs and professionals working in these programs.

5.1.4 The law requires that not less than 4% of the CCDF be set aside for quality activities. (658E(c)(3)(B), 658G, §§98.13(a), 98.16(h), 98.51) The Lead Agency estimates that the following amount and percentage will be used for the quality activities (not including targeted funds) during the 1-year period: October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010: \$ **8,007,494.00 (4%)**

ARRA

The Lead Agency estimates that the following amount and percentage of ARRA funds will be used for the quality activities (not including targeted funds) during the 1-year period: October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010: **\$9,557,852.00 (12%)**.

5.1.5 Check each activity in Table 5.1.5 that the Lead Agency will undertake to improve the availability and quality of child care (include activities funded through the 4% quality set-aside as well as the targeted funds for quality activities). (658D(b)(1)(D), 658E(c)(3)(B), §§98.13(a), 98.16(h)). **CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.**

Table 5.1.5 Activities to Improve the Availability and Quality of Child Care

Activity	Check if undertaking/ will undertake	Name and type of entity providing activity	Check if non-governmental entity
Comprehensive consumer education	X	CCR&Rs	X
Grants or loans to providers to assist in meeting State and local standards	X	DECAL	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monitoring compliance with licensing and regulatory requirements	X	DECAL	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professional development, including training, education, and technical assistance	X	DECAL	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improving salaries and other compensation for child care providers	X	DECAL	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activities to support a	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>

PLAN FOR CCDF SERVICES IN GEORGIA
FOR THE PERIOD 10/1/09 – 9/30/11

Activity	Check if undertaking/ will undertake	Name and type of entity providing activity	Check if non-governmental entity
Quality Rating System			
Activities in support of early language, literacy, pre-reading, and early math concepts development	X	DECAL & CCR&Rs	X
Activities to promote inclusive child care	X	DECAL & CCR&Rs	X
Healthy Child Care America and other health activities including those designed to promote the social and emotional development of children	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other quality activities that increase parental choice, and improve the quality and availability of child care. (§98.51(a)(1) and (2))	X	DECAL/DHS	<input type="checkbox"/>

5.1.6 For each activity checked in Table 5.1.5, a) **describe** the expected results of the activity. b) If you have conducted an evaluation of this activity, **describe the results**. If you have not conducted an evaluation, **describe** how you will evaluate the activities.

DHS is the Lead Agency and manages the child care subsidy program. DECAL leads the state's efforts in providing early care and education services by administering the state's CCDF quality set-aside and targeted funds. DECAL administers these funds working collaboratively with other state agencies and organizations to develop a comprehensive system of early care and education.

Comprehensive consumer education:

- **Child Care Resource and Referral Services (CCR&R) - www.gaccrra.org**

DECAL is mandated by state law to “promote consumer education to parents to help them select child care through the expansion of child care resource and referral agencies.” Georgia’s child care resource and referral system provides high-quality, family-centered consumer education and referrals; develops and maintains a computer database for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data; builds upon and support the system of early care and education, including school age care; and develops local partnerships.

Through a competitive bid process, DECAL awards and manages the state contracts with each of the CCR&R agencies and the statewide parent Referral system. The network of six CCR&R agencies serves all 159 counties in the state. One agency operates the statewide Child Care Resource and Referral Center to provide free parent resource and referral services through the operation of a call center and website where consumers can access information online. The call center maintains a computer database that includes all licensed, registered, and exempt child care programs in the state. This enables the call center to provide free referral information to parents and the public. Consumer education includes child care referrals, parent consultations, media campaigns, and distribution of education materials. Some services are provided for consumers whose primary language is not English.

The six regional CCR&Rs offer parent workshops, consumer education at locations convenient to families, and information through the agencies' websites. CCR&Rs distribute newsletters for parents and host parent workshops. The CCR&Rs collaborate with DECAL to reach families and implement statewide initiatives. The CCR&Rs work with DECAL's Nutrition Services Division to provide nutrition education for parents and children through the parent workshops and parent newsletters.

CCR&Rs collaborate and partner with other community groups in their regions. The CCR&Rs facilitate meetings with community members, business leaders, and stakeholders such as Georgia's Pre-K and Head Start programs. The CCR&Rs participate in promotional events and activities in the community to increase public awareness about CCR&R services.

DECAL oversees all contracts to assure that the services meet the quality level and expectations set forth in the contract language, contract attachments, program guidelines, and related rules, regulations and laws. Program monitoring visits are conducted to compare the operation of each project funded by DECAL with the contract, the request for proposal, and the program requirements. Desk reviews are conducted monthly. Reimbursement is authorized after the review if all documentation is complete, accurate, and the activities are on schedule. On-site reviews are conducted to provide individualized technical assistance and examine progress in meeting the program's goals and objectives. When deficiencies are found, corrective actions are required.

Grants or loans to providers to assist in meeting standards:

- **Accreditation Facilitation Project**

DECAL distributes a portion of the federal Child Care and Development Fund through a Request for Proposal process to organizations to provide accreditation facilitation services to child care programs. Grants are awarded to CCR&Rs and other organizations that have the demonstrated expertise and the capacity to provide technical assistance services to support early care and education and school-

age care programs in making and sustaining quality improvements to achieve national accreditation. Baseline assessments, using valid, reliable instruments to measure quality, are conducted to inform technical assistance. Child care programs exiting the project are assessed by the appropriate national accrediting body or receive post-assessments to measure progress. The on-site technical assistance and related professional development activities support a comprehensive and coordinated early care and education system that focuses on accountability and measurable results.

ARRA

Using ARRA funds, DECAL will enhance these accreditation facilitation services by providing accreditation support to child care programs participating in the project. National accreditation self-study materials will be provided and application fees and/or assessment fees will be paid on behalf child care programs seeking national accreditation. Programs already in a national accreditation process may receive materials and equipment required by the program to meet national accreditation standards – all of which impacts quality in programs.

The anticipated outcome of this project is a measurable increase in quality and an increase in the number nationally accredited child care programs in each CCR&R region.

Monitoring for compliance with licensing and regulatory requirements;

- **Family Day Care Home Monitoring**

CCDF funds have afforded DECAL the ability to monitor all of the approximately 5,500 registered family day care homes on a yearly basis. Prior to the use of CCDF funds, 20% of registered family day care homes were monitored once a year. Therefore, it was possible that a registered family day care home would be monitored once every three to five years. With annual monitoring, DECAL directs resources, staff time, knowledge, technical assistance and training to support family day care homes in providing safe, high-quality learning environments.

- **Differential Monitoring**

DECAL began the Differential Monitoring initiative to increase its effectiveness in monitoring child care learning centers. Differential Monitoring allows the child care licensing consultants to focus on a set of identified rules that, when not adhered to, pose the greatest risk to children. Eleven “core” rule categories that are more critical for children’s health and safety have been identified. All programs are evaluated according to the focused visit criteria. “Compliant” child care programs are defined by their adherence to the core rule areas. Each child care program is assigned a “level” of compliance based on the history of the program’s compliance. These levels are defined from level one to level four with level four being the “most compliant” and level one being “seriously non-compliant” with the core health and safety rules.

DECAL directs resources, staff time, knowledge, technical assistance and training to support child care learning centers in providing safe, high-quality learning environments particularly in these core rule categories.

ARRA

Using ARRA funds, DECAL will deliver intensive, hands-on support to child care programs identified as seriously non-compliant with health and safety rules to determine what degree of support is needed to move child care programs from seriously non-compliant to compliant.

The objectives of the project are to: increase the compliance levels of child care programs currently identified as non-compliant; sustain compliance for a minimum of six months after the intervention; increase the instructional quality of teachers and directors through training; increase the professional growth and development for teachers; provide a model for DECAL for future quality improvement for child care programs (standardize the process) and the probability for long-term sustainability; and inform staff as to how best to assist programs on a quality continuum.

Over 500 child care learning centers, group day care homes, and family day care homes which are non-compliant with health and safety rules will be selected. Many of these programs serve children who receive subsidies. The services will include intensive technical assistance and evaluation; training that addresses compliance, standards and instructional best practices; physical plant improvements (if needed for compliance), and an incentive for maintaining an improved level after six months of compliance.

- **Monitoring and Training Informal Providers**

DHS collaborates with the Child Care Services Division of DECAL to conduct a monitoring visit for all new informal (e.g. unregulated) child care providers who care for children subsidized through the CAPS program. DECAL's Child Care Services Division facilitates criminal background checks on each new informal provider. A Child Care Services consultant visits each site where child care is provided to ensure that the site meets basic health and safety requirements. A health and safety packet specifically designed for informal providers is delivered at the initial monitoring visit; smoke detectors and fire extinguishers are furnished if not present in the home. DECAL staff send electronic reports of monitoring visits to the State Child Care Unit and the appropriate county DFCS office. The State Child Care Unit and county DFCS office review the reports and take appropriate action when warranted.

Through the CCR&R system, free training is offered to informal providers who care for children subsidized through the CAPS program. The training helps the informal providers obtain the skills and knowledge necessary to establish and maintain a safe and developmentally appropriate in-home child care setting. This free training enables informal child care providers to satisfy the CAPS annual

requirement of eight state-approved training hours. The anticipated outcome of these projects is an increase in the number of informal providers that meet CAPS health and safety standards.

Professional Development, including Training, Education and Technical Assistance.

- **Georgia Early Care and Learning Professional Development System - <https://www.training.decal.state.ga.us/bfts/welcome.do>**

The purpose of the Georgia Early Care and Learning Professional Development System is to support practitioners in the field of early care and education by providing a statewide professional development system with a career ladder. Administered by DECAL, the system's goal is to improve the professional development of Georgia early care and education professionals who work with children and their families.

The foundation of the system is the Professional Development Competencies. The competencies for professionals in early care and education, school-age care, and administration have been reviewed and updated by a group of practitioners, subject-matter experts, and stakeholders. Competencies for Trainers, based on the National Association for the Education of Young Children trainer competencies, have been developed and are being implemented.

Trainers are approved as beginner, intermediate, advanced or specialized based on their level of certification, credentials, and education regarding the specific area for which they are approved to train. Child care staff members are encouraged to attend training appropriate to their level of experience and this system enables adequate numbers of training and trainers statewide to be identified and provided so the regulatory requirements for training can be met.

The second component of the system is the Georgia Training Approval System. This component promotes quality professional development by ensuring that qualified instructors deliver training based on adult learning principles. The training content is based on current theory and best practices in early childhood care and education and school age care. Child care professionals are required to attend specific training courses and this system ensures that training is adequately provided by qualified trainers.

The third component of the system is the Professional Development Registry. The registry will allow practitioners to access an on-going transcript of their professional development to identify their training needs based on the level of professional development they have achieved. Credential review and approval through one source will ensure consistent and accurate assignment of career levels and credentials for all child care professionals. A standardized list of early childhood care and education course work from accredited universities was developed and is utilized for this review and approval. The University of Georgia, the Professional Standards Commission, and educational credential verifying contractors assisted in

reviewing the verification process and developing the standardized list of course work.

ARRA

Using ARRA funds, DECAL will complete enhancements to the Professional Development Registry and the Training Approval System so that all early care and education professionals have one repository of credential information and continuing education credits. The ability to track credentialing data will help inform stakeholders and DECAL on compliance and the effectiveness of requiring lead teachers in all early care classes to have a minimum of a CDA.

Once fully implemented, the registry will allow DECAL to identify workforce characteristics and training needs in order to effectively plan and strategically fund professional development activities.

- Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies - www.gaccrra.org

Each child care resource and referral agency furnishes professional development training and technical assistance to early care and education professionals within the CCR&R regions. Each CCR&R offers state approved/accepted training for early care and education professionals, school age care professionals, and families to assist them in meeting the needs of the children in their care.

The professional development training provided by each of the CCR&Rs is based on the Georgia Professional Development System's Professional Development Competencies. Professional development training is designed to increase the professionals' knowledge of effective instructional practices and to encourage professionals to apply research-based practices in the child care setting. The CCR&Rs promote awareness of and participation in Georgia Professional Development System's Professional Development Registry by helping child care professionals to submit their information to the registry. The CCR&Rs market professional development training in their regions in the newsletters.

The CCR&Rs coordinate with local technical colleges and universities to link child care professionals interested in earning credentials or degrees to educational opportunities within the community. They promote awareness of the HOPE Grant program, HOPE Scholarship program, and the SCHOLARSHIPS program which offer financial aid.

Each child care resource and referral agency offers technical assistance services to child care programs seeking to improve the quality of care being provided and/or to programs seeking to achieve national accreditation.

Each CCR&R also offers technical assistance and training to support child care professionals and families in order to include children with special needs into child care settings with typically developing children.

The services support a comprehensive and coordinated early care and education system that focuses on accountability and measurable results.

- **SCHOLARSHIPS** - <http://www.caresolutions.com/content/page.cfm/195/>

SCHOLARSHIPS is Georgia's statewide educational assistance program for eligible early care and education professionals pursuing credentials or degrees in early childhood education. Funded by CCDF and administered by DECAL, the **SCHOLARSHIPS** program helps advance the credentials of staff who work in early childhood education programs with children ages birth to five years. **SCHOLARSHIPS** provides tuition assistance and a support stipend to approved professionals who work in a licensed child care learning center, a registered family or group day care home, work at least 25 hours a week as a teacher/assistant teacher or 40 hours per week as a director or an assistant director, earn less than \$14.45 per hour, and enroll in an eligible institution in an approved program of study. The Annual Program Summary FY 2007 is included as Attachment 5.1.6A. The report is available on-line at: <http://www.caresolutions.com/content/page.cfm/195/>.

ARRA

Using ARRA funds, DECAL will provide additional financial support for early care and education professionals to attain a CDA (or equivalent/higher credential) to meet the new child care learning center and family day care home standards/requirements. This additional support will increase the number of qualified early care and education professionals in the workforce.

- **Quality Initiatives Grants**

DECAL distributes a portion of the federal Child Care and Development Fund through a Quality Initiatives “Request for Proposal” process. DECAL solicits proposals which focus on services that will enable child care programs to meet standards; increase the professionals’ knowledge of effective instructional practices by offering professional development training; and encourage professionals to apply research-based practices in the child care setting by offering technical assistance. Grants are awarded to organizations that have the capacity to provide statewide services to support early care and education and school-age care programs in making and sustaining quality improvements and/or to achieve state or national accreditation. Professional development training is based on the Georgia Professional Development Competencies. The services support a comprehensive and coordinated early care and education system that focuses on accountability and measurable results.

Improving salaries and/or other compensation for providers

- **INCENTIVES** - <http://www.caresolutions.com/content/page.cfm/111/>

INCENTIVES is Georgia’s statewide salary supplement program designed to enhance the compensation of early care and education professionals to reduce

turnover in the workforce and to improve the professional qualifications for all staff working with children ages birth to five years. Funded by CCDF and administered by DECAL, INCENTIVES encourages and rewards eligible early care and education professionals for earning a credential or degree in the field and for tenure with their employer. The annual awards range from \$200 to \$1,000. The Annual Program Summary FY 2007 is included as Attachment 5.1.6A. The report is available on-line at: <http://www.caresolutions.com/content/page.cfm/112/>.

Activities in support of early language, literacy, pre-reading, and early math concepts development:

DECAL is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. Bright from the Start oversees a wide range of programs and initiatives to prepare Georgia's children to succeed.

Georgia defines school readiness by focusing on the nature of young children and how they learn. The definition encompasses families and how they live; communities and the services they provide; and schools and their readiness for children. Each of these factors affects a child's school readiness. A child is ready for school when: possible health barriers that block learning have been detected, suspected physical or mental disabilities have been addressed; enthusiasm, curiosity, and persistence toward learning is demonstrated, feelings of self and others are recognized; social and interpersonal skills are emerging; communication with others is effective; early literacy skills are evident; and a general knowledge about the world, things, places, events, and people has been acquired.

As the state agency charged with developing and maintaining a comprehensive system of early care and education, DECAL administers programs and initiatives to support early language, literacy, pre-reading, and early math concepts development in young children.

- Georgia's Pre-K Program - <http://www.decal.ga.gov/PreK/PreKMain.aspx>

Georgia's Pre-K Program was established in 1993 to provide Georgia's four-year-old children with high-quality preschool experiences. This voluntary program, funded by the Georgia Lottery for Education, will serve 82,000 children during the 2009-2010 school year.

Georgia's Pre-K Program is offered free to all four-year-old children regardless of parental income. A variety of organizations provide Pre-K services. Among these organizations are private non-profit and for-profit child care learning centers, public and private elementary schools, Head Start sites, hospitals, charter schools, military bases, colleges and universities, and postsecondary technical colleges. Consistent quality standards apply across all types of program settings and programs are monitored a minimum of twice a year. The public-private partnerships enable parents to choose the most appropriate settings for their children.

Georgia's Pre-K Program is successfully preparing children for school by providing an opportunity for them to develop school readiness skills in an environment that encourages them to have fun while learning.

An evaluation by Georgia State University, *The Georgia Early Childhood Study*, (<http://aysps.gsu.edu/epg/index.htm>), found that children who attended pre-kindergarten have higher academic and social ratings by their kindergarten teachers and better kindergarten attendance than children who did not attend preschool programs. Participation in a high-quality preschool program also helps children develop social and pre-academic skills that will help them succeed in kindergarten and throughout their educational experiences. Georgia's Pre-K Program anchors the state's development of a seamless, coordinated system of early care and learning and influences other state activities to support early learning.

ARRA

Using ARRA funds, DECAL will provide mini-grants to replace equipment in Pre-K classes that have been operating for 10 years. After over 10 years of "hands on" use by children, some of the equipment in Pre-K classrooms is worn, broken, or has been discarded because it is unsafe. Current state funding does not provide for equipment replacement. ARRA funds will allow Pre-K classes to replace and update equipment to continue maintaining the high quality standards of operating a Pre-K class. This will also initiate economic activity in the state by funding purchases of equipment and supplies.

DECAL will also increase funding for supplies by \$400 for every Georgia Pre-K class during the 2009-2010 school year. Benefits accrue to "at risk" students who make up 55% of Pre-K students.

- **The Work Sampling System**

The Work Sampling System has been implemented on a statewide basis to assess four-year olds in Georgia's Pre-K Program. The Work Sampling System, along with other sources of data, is funded with Georgia's Pre-K program funds and used to provide an emerging picture of a child's learning and development in relation to school readiness and the Georgia's Pre-K Content Standards. The Work Sampling System domains that are assessed include language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, the arts, physical development and health, approaches to learning, and personal and social development.

The Work Sampling System is administered continuously during the school year in the classrooms as children and teachers engage in classroom activities. Teachers observe and document children's performance through a variety of methods including, but not limited to, writing anecdotal notes, taking pictures, and selecting children's work samples. Children's performance is assessed on 55 performance indicators across seven domains.

Teachers use assessment results to plan instruction for the whole class, for small groups of students, and to meet the needs of individual students. They also use the assessment results on a daily basis to make adjustments to their lesson plans so that the needs of all children are met and to regularly inform parents of their child's progress.

Activities to promote inclusive child care

- Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies - <http://www.gaccrra.org/>

DECAL funds the inclusion coordinator system through the regional child care resource and referral agencies. The statewide inclusion coordinator at DECAL provides on-going support to the regional inclusion coordinators while the child care resource and referral agencies provide day-to-day oversight.

The regional inclusion coordinators are responsible for providing services to families who have children with special needs and the child care providers who care for them. The inclusion coordinators provide technical assistance to child care professionals who are caring for children with special needs. Technical assistance is offered on the telephone and child care program sites. The technical assistance may focus on the identified child or children or may focus on classroom inclusion issues. Consultation regarding a specific child is conducted with participation of the local education agency, the liaison for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C, and with parental consent. Consultation focuses on identifying and coordinating communication among families and all professionals involved with the child.

Inclusion coordinators deliver basic and advanced DECAL developed and approved inclusion training to families, child care providers, Georgia's Pre-K Program teachers and staff, Head Start staff, and after school program staff. In addition, inclusion coordinators coordinate regional communities of practice for inclusion issues.

Georgia was selected to participate in two national initiatives designed to create a statewide integrated system of professional development to support high quality inclusion for all children with disabilities. This work is being coordinated through a cross-sector council, the Georgia Quest for Quality Inclusion, which includes representation from leaders in professional development. As a part of this work, the state leadership team will sponsor regional teams comprised of professional development providers in each community who will identify the needs in the community related to increasing high quality inclusive early care and learning environments, and design professional development supports to meet these needs. Inclusion coordinators from the child care resource and referral agencies will lead these teams to complete the community assessment and to develop a written plan with measurable goals, strategies to accomplish these goals, and indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan.

The expected outcome is a strong, integrated system of professional development that supports providers in creating high quality, inclusive early care and education opportunities for all children in Georgia, thus increasing access to care for children with disabilities and their families.

- **Working Together for Young Children Inclusion Initiative**

The Georgia's Pre-K Program continues to partner with the Georgia Department of Education, Division of Exceptional Students, to increase the number of successful inclusion classrooms for Pre-K children. Special education teachers and Pre-K teachers receive training and support in best practices for early childhood inclusion from DECAL. This collaborative has continued to expand with inclusion classes throughout the state. Regional communities of practices are being developed to support professional development for teachers working in inclusive classrooms. A website is being developed by DECAL to promote inclusion and provide resources for both families and professionals. Although not supported with CCDF, this initiative will increase the number of successful inclusion classrooms for four-year old children.

Healthy Child Care America and other health activities including those designed to promote social and emotional development in children

- ***Behavior Intervention Program Training***

The *Behavior Intervention Program* is specialized training that addresses the needs of young children with behavior problems. This nationally recognized training has been used to train Georgia's Pre-K Program consultants and inclusion coordinators on using "functional behavior analysis" techniques when working with Pre-K programs on behavior management issues of children enrolled in the Pre-K program. Although not supported with CCDF, this training has enabled the consultants and inclusion coordinators to work effectively with providers and families who have children with behavior issues.

- **Family Support-Resource Coordination**

Resource coordinators work in many of Georgia's Pre-K Programs to involve parents in their child's educational development process. Parents are provided with opportunities to obtain needed health services for their children and attend child development seminars. Parents are provided with referrals to community resources, as needed, such as GED classes, employment counseling, literacy classes, access to substance abuse services, etc. Resource coordinators are also responsible for helping families transition from Pre-K into kindergarten through the Kindergarten Readiness Initiative. Although not funded by CCDF, resource coordination services assist families by focusing on child development, health resources, transition activities, and links to community resources.

Resource coordinators are integrating Strengthening Families approach (<http://www.strengtheningfamilies.net/>) into their work with families. The

Strengthening Families framework provides the resource coordinators with a strong foundation for providing intentional opportunities to promote family capacity to help their children. Strengthening Families is a strategy to prevent child abuse and neglect. It involves working with families to build protective factors around children.

The Strengthening Families training is offered through CCDF to child care resource and referral staff members and other practitioners in order to infuse the communities with individuals who can support families. Strengthening Families focuses on building protection for children within their homes and communities, and seeks to overcome or mitigate manageable causes of child neglect and abuse instead of removing children from their homes.

Other quality activities that increase parental choice, and improve the quality and availability of child care

- **Quality Systems Indicators**

DECAL has commissioned a statewide study measuring quality in early childhood programs either in child care centers or in local school systems for a sample of Georgia Pre-K programs. The study is being conducted by researchers at Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina. Dr. Kelly Maxwell is the lead researcher.

The purpose of the study is to determine the measurability of the indicators that were developed by a statewide Quality Systems Indicator Committee that met from August 2006 to April 2007. The Quality System Indicator Committee developed statewide indicators that would help the state measure quality and improve the quality of child care. The study will also gauge the quality of early care and learning environments across the state.

DECAL plans to use the results to develop a voluntary system for providers to invest in quality improvements. Developing a systematic approach to quality will require the commitment of all pertinent stakeholders. To this end, DECAL is committed to working with all partners to develop a systematic approach to early care and education that benefits all of Georgia's children.

- **Economic Impact of Early Care and Education Industry in Georgia**

DECAL funded a joint proposal between the Carl Vinson Institute at the University of Georgia (<http://www.cviog.uga.edu/>) and the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University (<http://aysps.gsu.edu/>) to conduct an economic impact analysis for the state and regional areas. The study, *Economic Impact of Early Care and Education Industry in Georgia*, was released in August 2008. The study demonstrates the economic impact of the child care industry on state and local economies. Analysis included impact in the form of wages and revenues, state and federal contributions, and parent contributions supported by the child care industry. Information sessions around the state as well as

distribution of key study materials increased public awareness of the importance of child care services to Georgia's economy.

In conjunction with the economic impact analysis, DECAL also commissioned a workforce development study. The study detailed key components Georgia's child care workforce. Results were published with the economic impact analysis. The executive summary, full report, and regional data sheets are available online at: <http://www.cviog.uga.edu/services/research/childcare/>.

- Customer Service Satisfaction Survey

Governor Sonny Perdue created the Governor's Office of Customer Service to create a report card for measuring Georgia state government services and become the nation's best-managed state. Employees all over the state joined this effort, proving that we are one organization, with one goal - "Team Georgia. Ready to Serve." In January 2007, DECAL joined with the Governor's Office of Customer Service to develop and launch a Customer Service Improvement Plan. In 2008, all employees attended a two-day customer service training. DECAL commissions quarterly customer satisfaction surveys to Georgia Pre-K programs, child care centers, family day care home providers, and nutrition administrators who have received a visit at least two weeks prior. The surveys are conducted by the Public Performance and Management Group from the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University. The *Study of Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction: October-December 2008 Report* is Attachment 5.1.6B.

5.2 Early Learning Guidelines and Professional Development Plans

5.2.1 Status of Voluntary Early Learning Guidelines. Indicate which of the following best describes the current status of the State's efforts to develop, implement, or revise research-based early learning guidelines (content standards) for three-to-five year-olds.

NOTE: Check only one box that best describes the status of your State/Territory's three-to-five-year-old guidelines.

- ☐ **Planning.** The State is planning for the development of early learning guidelines. Expected date of plan completion: ____ If possible, respond to questions 5.2.2 through 5.2.4.
- ☐ **Developing.** The State is in the process of developing early learning guidelines. Expected date of completion: ____ If possible, respond to questions 5.2.2 through 5.2.4.
- ☐ **Developed.** The State has approved the early learning guidelines, but has not yet developed or initiated an implementation plan. The early learning guidelines are included as **Attachment 5.2.1, if available**.
- ☐ **Implementing.** In addition to having developed early learning guidelines, the State has embarked on implementation efforts which may include dissemination, training or embedding guidelines in the professional development system. The guidelines are included as **Attachment 5.2.1**.

X Revising. The State has previously developed early learning guidelines and is now revising those guidelines. The guidelines are included as **Attachment 5.2.1.**

☐ **Other. Describe:**

a) Describe the progress made by the State/Territory in developing, implementing, or revising early learning guidelines for early learning since the date of submission of the 2008-2009 State Plan. Efforts to develop early learning guidelines for children birth to three or older than five may be described here.

Georgia offers universal public kindergarten in the local schools for five year olds. The Georgia Department of Education has developed Performance Standards for five-year-old children attending public school (<http://www.georgiastandards.org/>). The Performance Standards for Kindergarten include Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Representatives of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning have participated in the development of the Kindergarten Performance Standards.

DECAL has leadership for aligning the state's early learning guidelines for four-year-olds with the state's K-12 educational standards. The Pre-K Content Standards provide the foundation for instruction in all Georgia Pre-K classrooms and include seven curricular areas: Language and Literacy Development; Mathematics Development; Science Development; Social Studies Development; Creative Development; Social and Emotional Development, and Health and Physical Development. The Pre-K Content Standards include adaptations for inclusive environments and teacher resources for each learning domain. The Pre-K Content Standards are available to download from the DECAL website: <http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/PreK/PrekServices.aspx?Header=5&SubHeader=34&Position=11&HeaderName=Teachers>.

DECAL is revising the Pre-K Content Standards for four-year-old children enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program to be more congruent with the language in the Georgia Department of Education's Performance Standards for Kindergarten. Key staff members from the Georgia Department of Education with expertise in each content area are collaborating with DECAL staff to complete the revisions. The revisions are scheduled to be released with the 2009-2010 Pre-K Guidelines.

DECAL has developed the voluntary Georgia Early Learning Standards for infants, toddlers and preschoolers. The standards are intended to guide teachers and parents in offering meaningful educational opportunities for children birth through three. The standards address the question, "What should children from birth through three years of age be able to do?"

The Georgia Early Learning Standards are aligned with the Pre-K Content Standards and the Kindergarten Performance Standards as demonstrated in Appendix B of the standards, *“Alignment of Georgia Early Learning Standards with Georgia Pre-K and Kindergarten Performance Standards.”* The Georgia Early Learning Standards are available to download at: <http://www.dec.state.ga.us/CCS/CCSServices.aspx?Header=67&SubHeader=&Position=18&HeaderName=Georgia%20Early%20Learning%20Standards>.

ARRA

An advisory committee met to review the Georgia Early Learning Standards and make recommendations for changes and additions. Using ARRA funds, DECAL will revise and distribute an inclusive, seamless list of state content standards for children birth through five years that build on the Common Core State Standards for education. The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has joined the national Common Core State Standards Initiative to adopt the K-12 standards. Similarly, DECAL will revise and align the Georgia Early Learning Standards and the Pre-K Content Standards with the updated Georgia Kindergarten Performance Standards. The aligned birth through Pre-K standards will be incorporated into a seamless list of research- and evidence-based standards for educators and families.

b) If developed, are the guidelines aligned with K-12 content standards or other standards (e.g., Head Start Child Outcomes, State Performance Standards)?

☒ Yes. If yes, identify standards:

The Georgia Early Learning Standards are aligned with the Head Start Child Outcomes framework, the Pre-K Performance Indicators and the Georgia Department of Education’s Kindergarten Performance Standards (e.g. state’s K-12 content standards, <http://www.georgiastandards.org/>).

☐ No.

c) If developed, are the guidelines aligned with early childhood curricula?

☒ Yes. If yes, **describe:**

Any Pre-K approved curricula is aligned with the standards.

Any Pre-K approved curricula is aligned with the standards.

☐ No.

d) Have guidelines been developed for children in the following age groups:

☒ Birth to three. Guidelines are included as **Attachment 5.2.1A**

☒ Birth to five. Guidelines are included as **Attachment 5.2.1B**

☒ Five years or older. Guidelines are included as **Attachment 5.2.1C**

If any of your guidelines are available on the web, provide the appropriate Web site address (guidelines must still be attached to Plan):

The Kindergarten Performance Standards are available to download from the Department of Education's website: <http://www.georgiastandards.org/>.

**The Georgia's Pre-K Program Content Standards are available to download from DECAL's website at:
<http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/PreK/PrekServices.aspx?Header=5&SubHeader=34&Position=11&HeaderName=Teachers>.**

**The Georgia Early Learning Standards are available to download from DECAL's website at:
<http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/CCS/CCSSServices.aspx?Header=67&SubHeader=&Position=18&HeaderName=Georgia%20Early%20Learning%20Standards>.**

5.2.2 Domains of Voluntary Early Learning Guidelines. Do the guidelines for three-to-five-year-olds address language, literacy, pre-reading, and early math concepts?

☒ Yes.

☐ No.

a) Do the guidelines for children three-to-five-year-olds address other domains such as social/emotional, cognitive, physical, health, or creative arts?

☒ Yes. If yes, **describe.**

Georgia's Pre-K Content Standards for four-year olds include seven curricular areas: Language and Literacy Development, Mathematics Development, Science Development, Social Studies Development, Creative Development, Social and Emotional Development, and Health and Physical Development. The Content Standards are used for planning instruction, assessing growth and development, and sharing information with families.

The Georgia Early Learning Standards for children ages birth through three years old are a set of appropriate, attainable learning standards for Georgia's youngest children. At the same time, they are designed to be flexible enough to support children's individual rates of development, approaches to learning, and cultural context. The standards address five domains: Physical Development, Emotional and Social Development, Approaches to Learning, Language and Literacy Development, and Cognitive Development.

☐ No.

5.2.3 Implementation of Voluntary Early Learning Guidelines.

a) **Indicate** which strategies the State used, or expects to use, in implementing its early learning guidelines.

Check all that apply:

- ☒ Disseminating materials to practitioners and families
- ☒ Developing training curricula
- ☒ Partnering with other training entities to deliver training
- ☒ Aligning early learning guidelines with licensing, core competencies, and/or quality rating systems
- ☒ Other. **Describe: Higher education uses guidelines in training practitioners.**

b) **Indicate** which stakeholders are, or are expected to, actively support(ing) the implementation of early learning guidelines:

Check all that apply:

- ☐ Publicly funded (or subsidized) child care
- ☒ Head Start
- ☒ Education/Public pre-k
- ☒ Early Intervention
- ☒ Child Care Resource and Referral
- ☒ Higher Education
- ☒ Parent Associations
- ☐ Other. **Describe:**

c) **Indicate** the programs that mandate or require the use of early learning guidelines

- ☐ Publicly funded (or subsidized) child care
- ☐ Head Start
- ☒ Education/Public pre-k
- ☒ Early Intervention
- ☐ Child Care Resource and Referral
- ☐ Higher Education
- ☐ Parent Associations
- ☐ Other. **Describe:**

d) **Describe** how cultural, linguistic and individual variations are (or will be) acknowledged in implementation.

The Georgia Early Learning Standards (GELS), which are voluntary, adhere to guiding principles that support children's individual development and encourage caregivers to acknowledge and honor children's cultural, linguistic and individual variations. GELS guiding principles are:

- 1. Young children learn best when all aspects of development are treated as interconnected parts;**

2. Young children learn through active play and interaction with others which lay the foundation for school success and lifelong learning;
3. Each child develops at an individual rate and exhibits personal approaches to learning;
4. Early learning experiences must support the diverse culture, home language and individual ability of each child;
5. Learning and development are influenced by a child's relationship to family, educational setting, community and culture;
6. Early learning experiences must strengthen the connections between each family and the early childhood program;
7. Quality educational experiences for children are informed by research-based knowledge and practice; and
8. Early childhood teachers play a powerful role in the education of the youngest learners and deserve respect and dignity from the community at-large.

Similarly, Georgia's Pre-K Program Content Standards support individual development and encourage caregivers to acknowledge and honor children's cultural, linguistic and individual variations. The Pre-K Content Standards help practitioners plan instruction, assess growth and development, and share information with families. Instruction is individualized to meet each child's needs.

The standards incorporate strategies to support English language learners. Teachers reinforce language development by observing children and by creating environments that set the stage for language use. The classroom environment provides multicultural literature, pictures, music, and props. Classrooms that support English language learners have appropriate language-rich curriculum that includes parental involvement, supports the emotional development of children, and incorporates multicultural understanding.

The standards incorporate strategies to support children with differing abilities. Within each domain in the standards, suggestions are provided for adapting the domain to include and accommodate children with varying ability levels. The Georgia Department of Education uses standards in the early intervention program.

- e) Describe how the diversity of child care settings is (or will be) acknowledged in implementation.

The Georgia Early Learning Standards are written for teachers, parents of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Throughout the standards, the word "teacher" is used to refer to all adults who work with young children in group settings. This includes center-based teachers, assistant teachers, aids, paraprofessionals, caregivers, family child care providers, home-based teachers, and others who work with children in these settings.

Materials developed to support implementation of the guidelines are included as **Attachment 5.2.3**. If these are available on the web, provide the appropriate Web site address (guidelines must still be attached to Plan):

The Georgia Early Learning Standards activity guides focus on each domain and each age group in the standards. Each section provides an overview of the standard, activities and strategies for development, inclusion tips (cultural, linguistic and special needs), and teacher or parent tips. The spiral bound activity guides have been widely distributed to parents and child care programs. The activity guides are available on the DECAL website to download (www.dec.state.ga.us). The guides are included as Attachments 5.2.3. DECAL is reviewing an advisory committee's recommendations to revise and reformat the Georgia Early Learning Standards.

ARRA

Using ARRA funds, DECAL will develop and expand online teaching modules and podcasts for Georgia's early care and learning professionals. The online teaching modules will be informed by current early care and education research as well as innovative technology. The teaching modules will focus on the domains and developmentally appropriate practices that are indicators of high quality. The modules and podcasts will be made available to every teacher (all child care learning centers, group and family day care homes, and school systems) and all licensed/registered early care and education programs in Georgia. This accessible, effective training for professionals will increase the number of qualified teachers and the quality of care.

5.2.4 Assessment of Voluntary Early Learning Guidelines. As applicable, describe the State's plan for:

- a) Validating the content of the early learning guidelines

Representatives from DECAL participated in the development of the Georgia Performance Standards. In June 2006, DECAL revised the Content Standards of Georgia's Pre-K Program to reflect current educational research and align with the Kindergarten Georgia Performance Standards. DECAL is currently working with the Georgia Department of Education and Georgia State University to revise the language in the Georgia's Pre-K Content Standards to be more congruent with the Kindergarten Georgia Performance Standards. DECAL is revising the standards to provide more information on inclusion and special needs. The revisions are expected to be completed and posted on the DECAL website by July 1, 2009. By coordinating with the Department of Education, DECAL is aligning the Pre-K Content Standards and the voluntary Early Learning Standards for children birth through three with the Georgia K-12 Performance Standards.

The Pre-K Content Standards and the Georgia Early Learning Standards

have been reviewed by a national panel of experts in the field of early care and education. Feedback from the national review informed the revision of the Pre-K Content Standards and the Georgia Early Learning Standards.

ARRA

Using ARRA funds, DECAL will revise and distribute an inclusive, seamless list of state content standards for children birth through five years that build on the Common Core State Standards for education. The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has joined the national Common Core State Standards Initiative to adopt the K-12 standards. Similarly, DECAL will revise and align the Georgia Early Learning Standards and the Pre-K Content Standards with the updated Georgia Kindergarten Performance Standards. The aligned birth through Pre-K standards will be incorporated into a seamless list of research- and evidence-based standards for educators and families.

b) Assessing the effectiveness and/or implementation of the guidelines

DECAL consultants visit each Pre-K program at least twice annually to monitor and provide technical assistance and training. The Program Quality Assessment is completed annually to monitor compliance with the Pre-K guidelines. The Program Quality Assessment instrument is online at: <http://dec.al.ga.gov/PreK/PrekServices.aspx?Header=2&SubHeader=19&Position=2&HeaderName=Project%20Directors>.

The results of the Program Quality Assessment are posted on the Governor's Office of Student Achievement website (<http://www.gaosa.org/>). The assessment provides a snapshot of the Pre-K program and assists with the identification of program strengths and areas in need of improvement. The assessment is used to improve and maintain program quality.

Embedded within the Program Quality Assessment are indicators that link to the domains in Pre-K Content Standards. For example, the Program Quality Assessment indicator, "The environment and instruction promote language development" and artifacts/evidence for this indicator link to the "Language and Literacy Development" domain in the Pre-K Content Standards.

c) Assessing the progress of children using measures aligned with the guidelines

The Pre-K Content Standards are linked to on-going assessments used to document children's progress, guide instruction, and inform parents. During the 2007-2008 school year, Georgia's Pre-K Programs began full implementation of Georgia's Pre-K Child Assessment which incorporates the Work Sampling System, along with additional school readiness indicators, to assess children's progress, individualize instruction, and increase families' participation in their children's educational experience. Pre-K lead teachers, assistant teachers and directors have received training on the Georgia's

Pre-K Child Assessment Program.

A year of work led to the selection of the Work Sampling System (WSS), developed by Dr. Samuel J. Meisels and distributed by Pearson Early Learning, as a core component of Georgia's Pre-K Child Assessment. WSS best combined a measure of all of the domains within the Georgia's Pre-K Content Standards and the guidelines established by the advisory committee. WSS was piloted with over 500 teachers in select Pre-K programs around the state during the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years. Changes were made to the program based on the pilot program results, and Georgia's Pre-K Child Assessment (PQA) was implemented statewide during the 2006-2007 school year. The PQA is available at: <http://www.dec.state.ga.us/PreK/PrekServices.aspx?Header=5&SubHeader=157&Position=11&HeaderName=Teachers>.

During the 2008-2009 school year, an online version of Work Sampling System is being piloted with 200 teachers. Continuation of the pilot with 200 teachers is planned for the 2009-2010 school year. DECAL is currently working with Pearson Early Learning on customizations to the online system to better meet the needs of Georgia's Pre-K Child Assessment Program. The pilot will address the feasibility of using WSS aggregate data to demonstrate the effectiveness of Georgia Pre-K.

d) Aligning the guidelines with accountability initiatives

The Alliance of Education Agency Heads is creating a seamless education system from Pre-K through higher education. In cooperation with the National Association of Boards of Education (NASBE), Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) and the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) have been working to create a seamless education system through the development of a Pre-K through third grade model. Though funding for this project ended in 2008, work to further align the curriculum, assessment, and performance standards for children from birth through the third grade continues. GaDOE, in collaboration with DECAL, developed a new kindergarten assessment, the Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developmental Skills (GKIDS), that is correlated with the Georgia's Pre-K Child Assessment Program. Kindergarten teachers received training that included information about Georgia's Pre-K Child Assessment as part of their GKIDS training. GaDOE and DECAL are exploring future options for conducting cross-training between kindergarten and Pre-K teachers.

Written reports of these efforts are included as **Attachment 5.2.4**. If these are available on the web, **provide** the appropriate Web site address (reports must still be attached to Plan):

Not applicable.

5.2.5 Plans for Professional Development. Indicate which of the following best describes the current status of the Lead Agency's efforts to develop a professional development plan for early childhood providers that includes all the primary sectors: child care, Head Start, and public education. **NOTE: Check ONLY ONE box that best describes the status of your State's professional development plan.**

- ☐ **Planning.** Are steps underway to develop a plan?
- ☐ Yes, and **describe** the entities involved in the planning process, the time frames for completion and/or implementation, the steps anticipated, and how the plan is expected to support early language, literacy, pre-reading and early math concepts.
- ☐ No.
- ☐ **Developing.** A plan is being drafted. The draft or planning documents are included as **Attachment 5.2.5**, if applicable.
- ☐ **Developed.** A plan has been written but has not yet been implemented. The plan is included as **Attachment 5.2.5**, if applicable.
- ☒ **Implementing.** A plan has been written and is now in the process of being implemented, or has been implemented. The plan is included as **Attachment 5.2.5**.
- ☐ **Revising.** The State previously developed a professional development plan and is now revising that plan, or has revised it since submitting the 08-09 State Plan. The revisions or the revised plan are included as **Attachment 5.2.5**.
- ☐ **Other. Describe:**

a) **Describe** the progress made by the State in planning, developing, implementing, or revising the professional development plan since the date of submission of the 2008-2009 State Plan.

DECAL provides an infrastructure for professional development and technical assistance to support high quality, consistent service delivery across the state. Stakeholders representing all sectors of the early care and education community joined DECAL in developing the plan for the Georgia Early Care and Education Professional Development System. The statewide system includes competencies, a career ladder for early care and education professionals, a professional development registry, and a training approval system. DECAL is implementing the plan. The plan is included as Attachment 5.2.5A.

The Georgia Early Care and Education Professional Development System includes the following components:

- 1. The Georgia Professional Development Competencies provide a blueprint for individual professional growth as well as guidelines for training and**

education programs that will meet the needs of professionals in the field. Professional development and training activities must be based on the Georgia Professional Development Competencies. The competencies for early care and education professionals, school-age care professionals, program administrators and trainers have been reviewed by a group of practitioners, subject-matter experts, and stakeholders. To ensure that the competencies include recent research in the field of early care and education and support nationally recognized standards of excellence within the field of early childhood care and education and school age care, the competencies have been approved and provide the foundation for the Professional Development System. A document of the competencies is included as Attachment 5.2.5B and is available on the web at: <https://www.training.decal.ga.gov>.

2. The Georgia Child Care Training Approval System promotes quality professional development by ensuring that qualified instructors deliver training based on adult learning principles. The training content is based on current theory and best practices in early childhood care and education and school age care. The Georgia Child Care Training Approval System (www.training.decal.ga.gov) has been developed with statewide input from individuals involved in training and experts in the field of early care and education and school age care. All professional development and training must be reviewed and approved through by the Georgia Child Care Training Approval System.

Biannually, an Advisory Group is convened to evaluate the training system and the processes for approving trainers and training.

3. The Georgia Early Care and Education Professional Development Registry is a statewide system that guides, tracks and recognizes the professional growth and development of individuals working in early care and education. The registry will allow practitioners to access through the internet an on-going transcript of their professional development and be able to identify their training needs based on the level of professional development they have achieved. Once fully implemented, the registry will allow DECAL to identify workforce characteristics and training needs in order to effectively plan and strategically fund professional development activities. The registry allows practitioners to submit information by mail or to enter information on-line at: <https://www.training.decal.ga.gov/pdr/welcome.do>. All credentials are reviewed and approved through a consistent process that was developed through a collaborative partnership of early care and education professionals.

ARRA

Using ARRA funds, DECAL will complete enhancements to the Professional Development Registry and the Training Approval System so

that all early care and education professionals have one repository of credential information and continuing education credits. The ability to track credentialing data will help inform stakeholders and DECAL on compliance and the effectiveness of requiring lead teachers in all early care classes to have a minimum of a CDA.

b) If developed, does the plan include (Check EITHER yes or no for each item):

	Yes	No
Specific goals or desired outcomes	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
A link to Early Learning Guidelines	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Continuum of training and education to form a career path	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Articulation from one type of training to the next	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality assurance through approval of trainers	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality assurance through approval of training content	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
A system to track practitioners' training	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assessment or evaluation of training effectiveness	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
State Credentials – Please state for which roles (e.g. infant and toddler credential, directors' credential, etc.)	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specialized strategies to reach family, friend and neighbor caregivers	X	<input type="checkbox"/>

c) For each Yes response, reference the page(s) in the plan and briefly describe.

The plan has been developed and it includes timelines for implementation. The purpose of the Georgia Early Care and Education Professional Development System is to support practitioners in the field of early care and education by providing quality professional development experiences. The goal of the system: Practitioners are highly qualified professionals supported by an effective professional development system. The outcome will be a comprehensive statewide workforce development system for early care and education that will lead to increased credentials of providers. (Refer to page 1 of the plan.)

A link to early learning guidelines:

Georgia Professional Development System is based upon competencies for early care and education professionals, school-age care professionals, program administrators and trainers. The Early Childhood Educator-3 includes competencies that support intellectual competence specifically supporting early language, pre-reading skills and math concepts. The plan also incorporates the state's Pre-K Content Standards for four-year olds as

well as the voluntary Georgia Early Learning Standards for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers through age three years.

Continuum of training and education to form a career path:

All competencies have been reviewed to designate beginning, intermediate and advanced levels of competencies in each area. In addition, nine levels of professional development have been delineated. These levels are based on education and experience providing multiple entry points and career progressions for professionals. (Refer to page 1 of the plan.)

Articulation from one type of training to the next:

The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) provides a variety of programs for early care and education professionals. There are associate's degree and diploma programs in Early Childhood Care and Education and Pre-School Care and Education and technical certificate of credit programs in Child Development Associate, Child Development Specialist, Early Childhood Exceptionalities, Early Childhood Program Administrator, and School Age and Youth Care. The TCSG curriculum and the bachelors-level Birth-Age 5 certification program approved by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission have been aligned through an initiative funded by DECAL. Articulation agreements that build on the work at the technical colleges have been developed. As a result of this initiative, at least one university accepts for transfer the associate's degree hours from TCSG to the university's Early Care and Education and Early Childhood-Special Education bachelors program.

In addition, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia and the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) convened a Teacher Preparation Consortium for children birth to age five. The goals of the consortium are to develop the outline and delivery models for the program, consistent with the new PSC certification standards and aligned with the new curriculum standards developed by DECAL, and to lay out a timeline for start-up of a full complement of baccalaureate programs as well as an articulation agreement with TCSG. (Refer to page 1 of the plan.)

Early care and education professionals may access Georgia's HOPE Scholarship and HOPE Grant programs (<http://gacollege411.org/> or www.gsfc.org) that offer forgivable loans and grants for tuition and other educational expenses for students to attend colleges and technical schools. All Georgia residents are eligible for the HOPE Grant for up to 63 semester or 95 quarter hours of study toward a certificate or diploma at public institutions regardless of high school graduation date or grade point average. To qualify for HOPE Grant funding, the certificate or diploma program must be approved by the Technical College System of Georgia or be a comparable program of study approved by the Board of Regents. The grant provides full tuition, HOPE-approved mandatory fees, and a book allowance

of up to \$300 per academic year at public institutions. Full-time enrollment is not required, but students must be making satisfactory academic progress to maintain eligibility. The HOPE Grants and HOPE Scholarships are funded by the Georgia Lottery for Education.

Quality assurance through approval of trainers:

To become state approved, trainers must meet educational requirements, have experience in the field of early care and education and have knowledge of adult learning principles. The trainer completes and submits the Trainer Qualifications Application with a resume, transcripts, and letters of recommendation, prior to being approved to conduct trainings. (Refer to page 1 of the plan.)

Quality assurance through approval of training content:

Once state-approved, the trainer completes and submits the Training Approval Application, the training content outline, the instructional plan including handouts, copies of presentations, etc. for each training requiring approval. The training approval coordinator reviews these materials to determine if they meet the criteria for approval. Since topic areas related to early childhood care and education may require knowledge and expertise beyond that of the Training Approval Coordinator, a diverse panel of experts in child development, early childhood education, special education, and related fields has been established to review training applications and ensure that content is accurate and based on sound theories and principles of child development and child care. When training is submitted for approval or renewal, the trainer's qualifications are audited and the file is updated as needed. (Refer to page 1 of the plan.)

Trainings are approved for a period of five years. At any point, should the content be altered, revised or changed in any way, the training must be submitted for renewal.

A system to track practitioners' training:

The Georgia Early Care and Education Professional Development Registry guides, tracks and recognizes the professional growth and development of individuals working in early care and education. Teachers, assistant teachers, administrators, family-based providers, trainers, consultants, and technical assistance providers may use the registry. Professionals may participate in the registry by completing information on line or by submitting information via mail. (Refer to page 1 of the plan.)

Assessment or evaluation of training effectiveness:

Staff members from the Training Approval System at the University of Georgia monitor approximately 30 state-approved trainings annually for

quality assurance. Trainings to be monitored are randomly selected or may be selected if a complaint is received. The staff member sends a letter to the trainer to announce that a monitoring visit will occur. A monitoring tool is completed during the visit. At the end of the training, the staff member debriefs the trainer and provides technical assistance.

State credentials- Please state for which roles (e.g. infant and toddler credential, directors' credential, etc.

The Technical College System of Georgia (<http://www.tcsg.edu/>) offers Technical Certificates of Credit for individuals who have completed 21-35 hours of post-secondary education at one of the technical colleges. The following Technical Certificates of Credit are available: Child Development Associate I, Child Development Associate II, Child Development Specialist, Early Childhood Care and Education Assistant, Early Childhood Exceptionalities, Early Childhood Program Administrator, and School Age and Youth Care.

Through previous CCDF grants, many of the courses required for these Technical Certificates of Credit programs are available on-line; for example, all courses for the Child Development Associate I credential are available on-line. This two-quarter sequence of courses is designed to provide the formal training needed for early care and education professionals to apply for the CDA credential from the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition.

Specialized strategies to reach family, friend and neighbor caregivers:

The child care resource and referral agencies collaborate with local county DFCS to identify informal providers who receive child care subsidies through the CAPS program. The CCR&Rs send newsletters, offer information about programs and services, and furnish training to informal child care providers. The CCR&Rs assist any of these individuals who are seeking to register to operate a family day care home. CCR&Rs work with the informal providers who are interested in obtaining registration from DECAL by offering technical assistance and start-up funding, if available.

Informal providers who care for children subsidized by the DHS CAPS program are monitored by DECAL. The DECAL consultants link the informal caregivers to the Child and Adult Care Food Program sponsors and the local CCR&Rs. The consultants explain the CAPS annual training requirements. Informal providers must complete eight clock-hours of state-approved training annually, which they may receive from the CCR&Rs.

d) For each **No** response, **indicate** any plans the Lead Agency has to incorporate these components.

Not applicable.

e) Are the professional development opportunities described in the plan available:

Note: Check either yes or no for each item):

	Yes	No
Statewide	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
To Center-based Child Care Providers	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
To Group Home Providers	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
To Family Home Providers	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
To In-Home Providers	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (describe): Informal providers	X	<input type="checkbox"/>

f) **Describe** how the plan addresses early language, literacy, pre-reading, and early math concepts development.

The Georgia Professional Development System is based on competencies for early care and education professionals, school-age care professionals, program administrators and trainers. The Early Childhood Educator-3 includes competencies that support intellectual competence specifically supporting early language, pre-reading skills and math concepts. The plan also incorporates the state's Pre-K Content Standards for four-year olds as well as the voluntary Early Learning Standards for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers through age three years.

g) Are program or provider-level incentives offered to encourage provider training and education?

X Yes. **Describe**, including any connections between the incentives and training relating to early language, literacy, pre-reading and early math concepts.

Both the SCHOLARSHIPS and INCENTIVES programs assist child care professionals working with children ages birth to five years to increase their education in early childhood education or child development by attending Georgia's technical colleges, colleges or universities. The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia and the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) have convened a Teacher Preparation Consortium for children birth to age five. The goals of the consortium are to develop the outline and delivery models for the program, consistent with the new PSC certification standards and aligned with the new curriculum standards developed by DECAL and to lay out a timeline for start-up of a full complement of baccalaureate programs as well as an articulation agreement with the Technical College System of Georgia.

Funded by CCDF, the SCHOLARSHIPS program assists early care and education professionals with tuition and mandatory fees and provides a support stipend directly to them as they pursue credentials or degrees in early childhood education or child development. The INCENTIVES program supplements the compensation of early care and education professionals to improve the professional qualifications for all staff working with children ages birth up to five years and to reduce turnover in the workforce. DECAL oversees these programs.

ARRA

Using ARRA funds, DECAL will provide additional financial support for early care and education professionals to attain a CDA (or equivalent/higher credential) to meet new child care learning center and family day care home standards/requirements. This additional support will increase the number of qualified teachers in the workforce.

- ☐ No. **Describe** any plans to offer incentives to encourage provider training and education, including any connections between the incentives and training relating to early language, literacy, pre-reading and early math concepts?

h) As applicable, does the State assess the effectiveness of its professional development plan, including the achievement of any specified goals or desired outcomes?

- ☐ Yes. **Describe** how the professional development plan's effectiveness/goal is assessed.
- X** No. **Describe** any plans to include assessments of the professional development plan's effectiveness/goal achievement.

DECAL is implementing the professional development plan and an evaluation of the professional development system is integrated with the Balanced Scorecard. Evaluations for individual system components are planned and outlined below.

i) Does the State assess the effectiveness of specific professional development initiatives or components?

- X** Yes. **Describe** how specific professional development initiatives or components' effectiveness is assessed.
- ☐ No. **Describe** any plans to include assessments of specific professional development initiatives or components' effectiveness.

- **Georgia Child Care Training Approval System**

The Georgia Child Care Training Approval System promotes quality professional development by ensuring that qualified instructors deliver training based on adult learning principles. An advisory group is convened bi-annually to evaluate the training system and the processes for approving trainers and training.

- **SCHOLARSHIPS and INCENTIVES**

Extensive data is gathered and maintained about the early care and education professionals who participate in the SCHOLARSHIPS and/or INCENTIVES programs. The annual report outlines the programs' purposes and goals and summarizes data about program participation, trends, educational progress, educational completion, program retention and compensation. The Annual Program Summary FY 2007 is included as Attachment 5.1.6A. The report is available on-line at: <http://www.caresolutions.com/content/page.cfm/195/>.

j) As applicable, does (or will) the State use assessment to help shape or revise its professional development plan?

☐ Yes. **Describe** how assessment informs the professional development plan.

☒ No. **Describe** any plans to include assessment to inform the professional development plan.

DECAL is implementing the professional development plan and an evaluation of the professional development system is integrated with the Balanced Scorecard.

PART 6

HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR PROVIDERS

(Only the 50 States and the District of Columbia complete Part 6.)

The National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care (NRCHSCC) of DHHS's Maternal and Child Health Bureau supports a comprehensive, current, on-line listing of the licensing and regulatory requirements for child care in the 50 States and the District of Columbia. **Note: This database typically contains information on licensing requirements for meeting State or local law to operate (§98.40). This database does not contain registration or certification requirements specific only to participation in the CCDF program.**

In lieu of requiring a State Lead Agency to provide information that is already publicly available, ACF accepts this compilation as accurately reflecting the States' licensing

requirements.

The listing, which is maintained by the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center School of Nursing, is available on the World Wide Web at: <http://nrc.uchsc.edu/>.

CCDF regulations (§98.2) define the following categories of care:

- **Center-based child care provider:** Provider licensed or otherwise authorized to provide child care services for fewer than 24 hours per day per child in a non-residential setting, unless care in excess of 24 hours is due to the nature of the parent(s)' work.
- **Group home child care provider:** Two or more individuals who provide child care services for fewer than 24 hours per day per child, in a private residence other than the child's residence, unless care in excess of 24 hours is due to the nature of the parent(s)' work.
- **Family child care provider:** One individual who provides child care services for fewer than 24 hours per day per child, as the sole caregiver, in a private residence other than the child's residence, unless care in excess of 24 hours is due to the nature of the parent(s)'s work.
- **In-home child care provider:** Individual who provides child care services in the child's own home.

6.1 Health and Safety Requirements for Center-Based Providers (658E(c)(2)(F), §98.41, §98.16(j))

6.1.1 Are all center-based providers paid with CCDF funds subject to licensing under State law per the NRCHSCC's compilation? **Note:** Some States use the term certification or registration to refer to their licensing regulatory process. Do not check "Yes" if center-based providers simply must *register* or *be certified* to participate in the CCDF program separate from the State regulatory requirements.

☒ Yes. Answer 6.1.2, skip 6.1.3, and go to 6.2.

☐ No. **Describe** which center-based providers are exempt from licensing under State law and answer 6.1.2 and 6.1.3.

6.1.2 Have center licensing requirements as relates to staff-child ratios, group size, or staff training been modified since approval of the last State Plan?
(§98.41(a)(2)&(3))

☒ Yes, and the changes are as follows:

- **Rule 591-1-1-.03 Activities**

Child care learning centers must have a planned program of activities for children which includes six specific developmental domains. Lesson plans that include activities in all domain areas are now required.

- **Rule 591-1-1-.14 First Aid and CPR**
Syrup of ipecac is no longer required for the first aid kit; protective eye wear and face mask are now required.
- **Rule 591-1-1-.21 Operational Policies and Procedures**
Child care learning centers must have policies and procedures to encourage parental involvement and notification to parents of the child's progress and other issues relating to the child.

Regular fire drills and emergency drills are required along with documentation of such drills.

- **Rule 591-1-1-.33 Staff Training**
Orientation for new staff has been expanded to include topics such as administration of medication, reducing the risk of Sudden Infant Death, hand washing, and fire safety, among other topics.
- **Rule 290-2-2-.5 Licenses, Commissions, and Exemptions**
Exemption from licensure is provided to faith-based child care learning centers that are accredited by a state, regional, or national accrediting agency for religious education instruction.

In addition, DECAL has added rules regarding breastfeeding initiatives, e-mail contact information, required reporting for missing children and seat belts.

Rules for Child Care Learning Centers, Chapter 591-1-1, are available online at: <http://decalfga.gov/CCS/CCSMain.aspx>.

☐ No.

- 6.1.3 For center-based care that is NOT licensed, and therefore not reflected in NRCHSCC's compilation, the following health and safety requirements apply to child care services provided under the CCDF for:

a) The prevention and control of infectious disease (including age-appropriate immunizations)

Not applicable.

b) Building and physical premises safety

Not applicable.

c) Health and safety training

Not applicable.

d) Other requirements for center-based child care services provided under the CCDF

Not applicable.

6.2 Health and Safety Requirements for Group Home Child Care Providers
(658E(c)(2)(F), §§98.41, 98.16(j))

6.2.1 Are all group home providers paid with CCDF funds subject to licensing under State law that is indicated in the NRCHSCC's compilation? **Note:** Some States use the term certification or registration to refer to their licensing regulatory process. Do not check “Yes” if group home child care providers simply must *register* or *be certified* to participate in the CCDF program separate from the State regulatory requirements.

☒ Yes. Answer 6.2.2, skip 6.2.3, and go to 6.3.

☐ No. **Describe** which group home providers are exempt from licensing under State law and answer 6.2.2 and 6.2.3.

☐ N/A. Group home child care is not a category of care in this State. Skip to Question 6.3.1

6.2.2 Have group home licensing requirements that relate to staff-child ratios, group size, or staff training been modified since the approval of the last State Plan?
(§98.41(a)(2) & (3))

☐ Yes, and the changes are as follows:

☒ No, **however rule amendments are pending.**

6.2.3 For group home care that is NOT licensed, and therefore not reflected in NRCHSCC's compilation, the following health and safety requirements apply to child care services provided under the CCDF for:

a) The prevention and control of infectious disease (including age-appropriate immunizations)

Not applicable.

b) Building and physical premises safety

Not applicable.

c) Health and safety training

Not applicable.

d) Other requirements for group home child care services provided under the CCDF

Not applicable.

6.3 Health and Safety Requirements for Family Child Care Providers (658E(c)(2)(F), §§98.41, 98.16(j))

6.3.1 Are all family child care providers paid with CCDF funds subject to licensing under State law that is indicated in the NRCHSCC's compilation? **Note:** Some States use the term certification or registration to refer to their licensing regulatory process. Do not check “Yes” if family child care providers simply must *register* or *be certified* to participate in the CCDF program separate from the State regulatory requirements.

☒ Yes. Answer 6.3.2, skip 6.3.3, and go to 6.4.

☐ No. **Describe** which family child care providers are exempt from licensing under State law and answer 6.3.2 and 6.3.3.

6.3.2 Have family child care provider requirements that relate to staff-child ratios, group size, or staff training been modified since the approval of the last State Plan? (§98.41(a)(2) & (3))

☒ Yes, and the changes are as follows:

- **Rule 290-2-3-.04 Registration Requirements**
Pre-service training is required for all applicants prior to submission of registration application.

DECAL has the authority to conduct on site pre-registration visits of applicants.

- **Rule 290-2-3-.07 Staffing and Supervision**
Specified educational credentials are required for all new applicants effective on or after July 1, 2009.

DECAL may request information on qualifications and/or credible evidence on staff and employees at any time.

- **Rule 290-2-3-.08 Records**

Providers are required to establish policies and procedures governing the operation of the family day care home, including a written description of services. These policies and procedures are to be made available to parents.

- **Rule 290-2-3-.09 Children's Activities**
Providers are to furnish a variety of daily activities appropriate for children's chronological and developmental levels.
- **Rule 290-2-3-.11 Health, Safety, and Discipline**
Providers are to maintain first aid kits with specified contents within the home and in any vehicle used to transport children.
- **Rule 290-2-3-.13 Building and Grounds**
Resilient surface is required beneath climbing and swinging equipment and fall zones of such equipment.

Additional rule amendments are pending.

☐ No.

6.3.3 For family care that is NOT licensed, and therefore not reflected in NRCHSCC's compilation, the following health and safety requirements apply to child care services provided under the CCDF for:

a) The prevention and control of infectious disease (including age-appropriate immunizations)

Not applicable.

b) Building and physical premises safety

Not applicable.

c) Health and safety training

Not applicable.

d) Other requirements for family child care services provided under the CCDF

Not applicable.

6.4 Health and Safety Requirements for In-Home Child Care Providers (658E(c)(2)(F), §§98.41, 98.16(j))

Note: Before responding to Question 6.4.1, **check** the NRCHSCC's compilation of licensing requirements to verify if **in-home child care** as defined by CCDF and your State is covered. If not, **check** no for 6.4.1. Do not check "Yes" if in-home child care providers simply must *register* or *be certified* to participate in the CCDF program separate from the State regulatory requirements.

- 6.4.1 Are all in-home child care providers paid with CCDF funds subject to licensing under the State law reflected in the NRCHSCC's compilation?

☐ Yes. Answer 6.4.2, skip 6.4.3, and go to 6.5.

X No. **Describe** which in-home child care providers are exempt from licensing under State law and answer 6.4.2 and 6.4.3.

Informal providers are not legally required to be licensed or registered with DECAL. There are two types of informal providers:

1. ***Relative providers* - child(ren)'s aunts, uncles, grandparents, great-grandparents or older siblings. These providers may provide child care services in the child's home or in the relative's home. Relative providers may keep up to six children who are related to them for pay without registering with DECAL.**
2. ***Non-relative providers* - child care providers who keep one or two children, who are not related to them, for pay. Non-relative providers must provide care outside of the child's home. Providers must register with DECAL if they care for more than two children for pay.**

Informal providers are monitored for health and safety compliance within six to eight weeks of initial enrollment with the county and thereafter as part of a 10% random sample group.

- 6.4.2 Have in-home health and safety requirements that relate to staff-child ratios, group size, or training been modified since the approval of the last State Plan? (§98.41(a)(2) & (3))

☐ Yes, and the changes are as follows:

X No.

- 6.4.2 For in-home care that is NOT licensed, and therefore not reflected in NRCHSCC's compilation, the following health and safety requirements apply to child care services provided under the CCDF for:

- a) The prevention and control of infectious disease (including age-appropriate immunizations)

Parents are required to have their child's immunizations current. Caseworkers verify immunizations status at the time they determine the family's eligibility for child care services if the child is not enrolled in school or another setting that verifies immunization status. DECAL monitors all newly enrolled in-home providers. A 20% sample of existing providers is monitored annually. Monitors share information regarding Georgia's immunization law, as well as other health and safety information with providers at this visit.

b) Building and physical premises safety

DECAL conducts a monitoring visit for new in-home providers who are required to have a working smoke detector and a working fire extinguisher in the place where they provide care. Additionally, information related to fire drills, proper storage of poisons, guns, matches, etc., covered outlets, safe outdoor play area, covered fireplaces, overall clean and safe area are evaluated and discussed during the monitoring visit.

c) Health and safety training

Eight hours of child care related health and safety training is required for in-home providers during the first six months of each enrollment period. Providers may attend health and safety training offered by child care resource and referral agencies, community based agencies, technical schools, hospitals, county extension agencies, Head Start, etc. Child care providers who fail to meet the requirements are dismissed from the program.

d) Other requirements for child care services provided under the CCDF

Not applicable.

6.5 Exemptions to Health and Safety Requirements

At Lead Agency option, the following relatives: grandparents, great grandparents, aunts, uncles, or siblings (who live in a separate residence from the child in care) may be exempted from health and safety requirements. (658P(4)(B), §98.41(a)(1)(ii)(A))

Indicate the Lead Agency's policy regarding these relative providers:

- ☐ All relative providers are subject to the same requirements as described in sections 6.1 - 6.4 above, as appropriate; there are **no exemptions** for relatives or different requirements for them.
- ☐ All relative providers are **exempt** from all health and safety requirements.
- ☐ **Some or all** relative providers are subject to different health and safety requirements from those described in sections 6.1 - 6.4. The following a) describes those requirements and b) identifies the relatives they apply to:

6.6 Enforcement of Health and Safety Requirements

6.6.1 Each Lead Agency is required to certify that procedures are in effect to ensure that child care providers of services for which assistance is provided comply with all applicable health and safety requirements. (658E(c)(2)(E), §§98.40(a)(2), 98.41(d))

Describe how health and safety requirements are effectively enforced, including at a minimum:

a) Are child care providers subject to routine unannounced visits (i.e., not specifically for the purpose of complaint investigation or issuance/renewal of a license)?

☒ Yes, and **indicate** the provider categories subject to routine unannounced visits and the frequency of those visits:

The Differentiated Monitoring system provides for all child care providers in Georgia (centers, family day care homes and group homes) to receive an unannounced visit at least once per year. The alternate monitoring system permits additional visits to providers who are noncompliant with the basic health and safety rules; providers can be visited three or more times a year. All follow-up and complaint investigations are unannounced. Technical assistance visits to child care centers are typically announced. All follow-up and complaint investigations are unannounced.

☐ No.

b) Are child care providers subject to background checks?

☒ Yes, and **indicate** the types of providers subject to background checks and when such checks are conducted:

All informal child care providers who receive CAPS subsidies must complete a satisfactory criminal background check within six weeks of enrolling with CAPS to provide subsidized care.

For family day care homes, a satisfactory criminal background check is required of all adults (18 years and older) living in the home when the provider applies for registration with DECAL. Registration is not approved until a satisfactory criminal background check is received by DECAL. Any assistants helping with the children must also successfully complete a criminal background check.

In child care learning centers and group day care homes, a satisfactory criminal background check is required of all teachers, assistants, directors, and any substitutes prior to the person working at the center or group day care home.

☐ No.

c) Does the State require that child care providers report serious injuries that occur while a child is in care? (Serious injuries are defined as injuries requiring medical treatment by a doctor, nurse, dentist, or other medical professional.)

X Yes, and **describe** the State's reporting requirements and how such injuries are tracked (if applicable):

Child care providers are required to report, within 24 hours, any serious injury to children requiring medical care. An incident report is entered in the computer system for tracking. The consultant completes an investigation to determine if there is a rule violation. Serious health and safety violations require a corrective action plan. DECAL consultants conduct follow-up visits to assure compliance.

☐ No.

f) Describe any other methods used to ensure that health and safety requirements are effectively enforced:

Child care providers that participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) are reviewed to ensure that the participant is operating the program properly and to provide technical assistance as needed. This review is an analysis of the provider's compliance with program rules and regulations. A corrective action plan will be developed to address any program violations discovered during the course of the review. In addition to scheduled reviews, CACFP sponsors or DECAL staff may visit a program participant to provide technical assistance, follow-up on violations discovered in a previous review or conduct an investigation due to a complaint of the program. Program participants who have repeat violations and are unable to correct the deficiencies may be terminated from the program.

The CAPS program has strengthened guidelines to assist county DFCS staff in taking appropriate actions to ensure children remain in safe environments. The guidelines specify what actions should be taken if a provider is under investigation, has deficiencies, civil penalties, and have their license is revoked by the state licensing agency. The guidelines also specify how to notify and assist parents if the CAPS program elects to discontinue the purchase of care from the provider

ARRA

Using ARRA funds, DECAL will deliver intensive, hands-on support to child care programs identified as seriously non-compliant with health and safety

rules to determine what degree of support is needed to move child care programs from seriously non-compliant to compliant.

The objectives of the project are to: increase the compliance levels of child care programs currently identified as non-compliant; sustain compliance for a minimum of six months after the intervention; increase the instructional quality of teachers and directors through training; increase the professional growth and development for teachers; provide a model for DECAL for future quality improvement for child care programs (standardize the process) and the probability for long-term sustainability; and inform staff as to how best to assist programs on a quality continuum.

Over 500 child care learning centers, group day care homes, and family day care homes which are non-compliant with health and safety rules will be selected. Many of these programs serve children who receive subsidies. The services will include intensive technical assistance and evaluation; training that addresses compliance, standards and instructional best practices; physical plant improvements (if needed for compliance), and an incentive for maintaining an improved level after six months of compliance.

6.7 Exemptions from Immunization Requirements

The State assures that children receiving services under the CCDF are age-appropriately immunized, and that the health and safety provisions regarding immunizations incorporate (by reference or otherwise) the latest recommendations for childhood immunizations of the State public health agency. (§98.41(a)(1))

The State exempts the following children from immunization (check all that apply):

- ☐ Children who are cared for by relatives (defined as grandparents, great grandparents, siblings (if living in a separate residence), aunts and uncles).
- ☐ Children who receive care in their own homes.
- ☒ Children whose parents object to immunization on religious grounds.
- ☒ Children whose medical condition contraindicates immunization.

APPENDIX 1

CCDF PROGRAM ASSURANCES AND CERTIFICATIONS

The Lead Agency, named in Part 1 of this Plan, assures (§98.15) that:

- (1) upon approval, it will have in effect a program that complies with the provisions of the Plan printed herein, and is administered in accordance with the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 as amended, Section 418 of the Social Security Act, and all other applicable Federal laws and regulations. (658D(b), 658E(a))
- (2) the parent(s) of each eligible child within the State who receives or is offered child care services for which financial assistance is provided is given the option either to enroll such child with a child care provider that has a grant or contract for the provision of the service; or to receive a child care certificate. (658E(c)(2)(A)(i))
- (3) in cases in which the parent(s) elects to enroll the child with a provider that has a grant or contract with the Lead Agency, the child will be enrolled with the eligible provider selected by the parent to the maximum extent practicable. (658E(c)(2)(A)(ii))
- (4) the child care certificate offered to parents shall be of a value commensurate with the subsidy value of child care services provided under a grant or contract. (658E(c)(2)(A)(iii))
- (5) with respect to State and local regulatory requirements, health and safety requirements, payment rates, and registration requirements, State or local rules, procedures or other requirements promulgated for the purpose of the Child Care and Development Fund will not significantly restrict parental choice among categories of care or types of providers. (658E(c)(2)(A), §98.15(p), §98.30(g), §98.40(b)(2), §98.41(b), §98.43(c), §98.45(d))
- (6) that children receiving services under the CCDF are age-appropriately immunized, and that the health and safety provisions regarding immunizations incorporate (by reference or otherwise) the latest recommendation for childhood immunizations of the State public health agency. (§98.41(a)(1))
- (7) that CCDF Discretionary funds are used to supplement, not supplant, State general revenue funds for child care assistance for low-income families. (P.L. 109-149)

The Lead Agency also certifies that:

- (1) it has procedures in place to ensure that providers of child care services for which assistance is provided under the Child Care and Development Fund afford parents unlimited access to their children and to the providers caring for their children during the normal hours of operations and whenever such children are in the care of such providers. (658E(c)(2)(B))
- (2) it maintains a record of substantiated parental complaints and makes information regarding such complaints available to the public on request. (658E(c)(2)(C))

- (3) it will collect and disseminate to parents of eligible children and the general public consumer education information that will promote informed child care choices. (658E(c)(2)(D))
- (4) it has in effect licensing requirements applicable to child care services provided in the State. (658E(c)(2)(E))
- (5) there are in effect within the State (or other area served by the Lead Agency), under State or local law, requirements designed to protect the health and safety of children; these requirements are applicable to child care providers that provide services for which assistance is made available under the Child Care and Development Fund. (658E(c)(2)(E))
- (6) procedures are in effect to ensure that child care providers of services for which assistance is provided under the Child Care and Development Fund comply with all applicable State or local health and safety requirements. (658E(c)(2)(G))
- (7) payment rates under the Child Care and Development Fund for the provision of child care services are sufficient to ensure equal access for eligible children to comparable child care services in the State or sub-State area that are provided to children whose parents are not eligible to receive assistance under this program or under any other Federal or State child care assistance programs. (658E(c)(4)(A))

APPENDIX 2 ELIGIBILITY AND PRIORITY TERMINOLOGY

For purposes of determining eligibility and/or priority for CCDF-funded child care services, Lead Agencies must **define** the following *italicized* terms. (658P, 658E(c)(3)(B))

- *in loco parentis* – **adult who has assumed responsibility for the care of a minor child.**
- *physical or mental incapacity* (if the Lead Agency provides such services to children age 13 and older) - **that which prevents, impairs, interferes with, or impedes life activities by placing limitations on an individual's ability to fully engage in skills, such as self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, breathing, mobility, seeing, and self-direction. Children who meet the criteria for special needs may be subsidized up to age 18.**
- *protective services* – **social services for children who are maltreated (neglected, abused, or exploited) or who are at risk of maltreatment, or who are in state custody/foster care.**
- *residing with* - **the person needing child care and the children for who care is requested live in the same household**
- *special needs child* – **a child under the age of eighteen with a documented physical, behavioral, or mental condition who is not capable of self care**
- *very low income* – **Families who are eligible to receive TANF.**
- **List and define** any additional terminology related to conditions of eligibility and/or priority established by the Lead Agency:

Not Applicable.

APPENDIX 3: ADDITIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

CCDF Regulations 45 CFR §98.13(b)(2)-(6) require the following certifications.

- 1. Assurance of compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964:**
<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/ps690.pdf>
- 2. Certification regarding debarment:**
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofs/grants/debar.htm>
- 3. Definitions for use with certification of debarment:**
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofs/grants/debar.htm>
- 4. HHS certification regarding drug-free workplace requirements:**
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofs/grants/drugfree.htm>
- 5. Certification of Compliance with the Pro-Children Act of 1994:**
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofs/grants/tobacco.htm>
- 6. Certification regarding lobbying:**
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofs/grants/lobby.htm>

These certifications were obtained in the 1997 Plan and need not be collected again if there has been no change in Lead Agency. If there has been a change in Lead Agency, these certifications must be completed and submitted with the Plan.

REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS

List all attachments included with this Plan.

Number	Agency	Title
2.1.2	DHS	Child Care Unit Business Continuity Plan
2.1.3 A	DECAL	Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) - Logic Model
2.1.3 B	DECAL	ECCS - System Integration
2.2	DHS	Summary of Public Comment
3.1.1 A	DHS	CAPS Policy Manual (Guidelines for Administering the Subsidy Program)
3.1.1 B	DHS	CAPS Provider Handbook
3.1.1 C	DHS	TCCA Policy Manual
3.2 1	DHS	Child Care Subsidy Rates
3.2 3	DHS	Child Care Market Rate Survey
3.3.2	DHS	Applicable and Non-Applicable Income
3.3.2 A	DHS	TCCA - Applicable and Non-Applicable Income
3.5.1	DHS	CAPS Sliding Fee Scale
4.1.1 A	DHS	CAPS Application
4.1.1 B	DHS	CAPS Application - Spanish
4.1.1 C	DHS	TCCA Application
5.1.6 A	DECAL	SCHOLARSHIPS and INCENTIVES Programs Report for 2008
5.1.6 B	DECAL	Study of Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction: October-December 2008 Report
5.2.1 A	DECAL	Georgia Early Learning Guidelines
5.2.1 B	DECAL	Georgia's Pre-K Content Standards
5.2.1 C	DOE	Kindergarten Performance Standards
5.2.3 A	DECAL	GELS Parent Activity Guide
5.2.3 B	DECAL	GELS Teacher Activity Guide
5.2.3 C	DECAL	Program Quality Assessment
5.2.4	DECAL	Georgia's Pre-K Content Standards and Work Sampling System Correlations
5.2.5 A	DECAL	State Plan for Professional Development
5.2.5 B	DECAL	Georgia Professional Development Competencies